

A BIRD'S-EYE-VIEW OF AL-MADINA.

In the far off ground the Tomb of the Holy Prophet Muhammed is seen with Minarets. Lacs of Pilgrims visit the Tomb after they perform Haj.

MUHAMMAD THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL

BY

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B. LITT., H. M. D.



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“**T**HOSE who responded to the Call of Allah and the Apostle after the *MISFORTUNE* had befallen them, those among them who do good (to others) and guard (against evil) shall have a great reward.”

Al-Quran III: 171.

MUHAMMAD
THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL.



HIS HIGHNESS
SIR SULTAN MUHAMMAD SHAH AGA KHAN,
G. C. V. O., G. C. S. I., G. C. I. E., LL. D.

Dedicated

To

*The Great Moslem Philanthropist-
His Highness Sir Sultan Muhammad
Shah Aga Khan, G.C.V.O., G.C.I.E.,
G.C.I.E., LL.D. etc. for his strenuous
services to Islam & Moslems and the
kindness I owe him.*

Muhammad Ali Al-Haj

BOMBAY:

1st April, 1933, A.D.

5th Zul Hijjah 1351 A.H.

Salmin.

TRANSLATION

SALAAMS TO THE PROPHET

“ O Morning breeze! greet the Prophet of the World
on my behalf. Go, go, and tell the news of my broken
heart to him.”

* * * *

“ Tell him, that on account of separation both my heart
and soul are bleeding, please send me the ointment of your
kindness for application to my sores.”

* * * *

“ Tell him that the state of your slaves has grown worse
than worst. O Morning breeze! Please do speak of my
intense love to him.”

* * * *

“ All the lovers are deep in love with you. (O Breeze)
Please convey this news to the threshold of Muhammad.”

* * * *

“ If you go to that embodiment of virtue and beauty at
Medina, convey salaams to that Emperor of sweet deportment.”

* * * *

“ It opens the bud of my heart with delight. Please blow
the draughts of cold wind to me always from the Lane of Love.”

* * * *

“ On account of the exceeding desire of seeing you, we
have almost reached the point of death. O Apostle of Allah!
kindly blow the scented breeze from your ‘musked’ lock
to our withered souls.”

“ O cold breeze ! kindly show the light of his (the Prôphet's) beauty always to my poor heart, which is now a martyr of love for the Prophet.”

* * * * *

“ O Apostle of Allah ! throw your errand of love, over and over again, which is the centre of beauty (and reflection), through the light of your beauty over my heart.”

* * * * *

“ O breeze ! (kindly) go to that ground, on which his (the Prophet's) grave stands, and convey the desire of my heart to him there.”

BY THE COURTESY OF Mr. DARD KAKORVI

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Ali The Caliph.

Husain, The Greatest World-Martyr.

**Muhammad, The Commander Of The
Faithful.**

The Challenge Of The Quran Etc., Etc.

PREFACE.

THE PROPHET.

Investigate deeply and carefully the work of the various religious reformers in the world and see whose message is stamped with that all-embracing universality and humanity. Who brought about the universality in the world of two things that are the fundamental basis of a true, universal religion of a truly democratic society? I mean about (1) Universal prayers and (2) Universal taking of food on the same table and in the same dish, irrespective of the question of position, grade, rank, status, caste, class, or of feelings and sentiment about superiority and inferiority. Is there any record in the world's history to prove that any other person or society, a sage or a hermit, an apostle or a magnate, or a reformer, has brought about this universality, so wonderfully wrought by the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah), who is the pride and glory of Islam? The world and its age-long history fail to

answer this pertinent but ever-green question, and our obvious silence is an incontrovertible testimony regarding the unique character of the message to the world of that great personality of unchallenged merit and credit.

Did Moses bring a message to the whole creation? Was it of a universal character? It was rather a message to the favoured few, the Israelites, wholly confined to them. They (the Israelites) thought they were the only chosen ones of God. To them, Torah or the Old Testament, was the only revealed book that was ever given by the Almighty to the world for all the times to come. They were proud to have the Book which was entirely confined to them—"the children of Israel, the chosen of God."

Next comes the message of Christ—the Messiah, the Apostle of the Lord of the Worlds. He was gifted with revelations for the guidance of the Israelites, the people of the Torah. His message was also of a limited character, limited to the Jews, the inhabitants of Nazareth and round about that, not for the whole humanity. The

Messiah did never leave his mother-land. He did travel from village to village, curing diseases, and he had an unbounded love for children. But his message, the important thing, had its limitations. The words of the Lord were not recorded there and then in the life-time of Christ. Within that period interpolations worked havoc, till four Apostles, unwarranted, of Jesus, proclaimed that they possessed the words of their Lord. To-day, we see Jesus speaking in these four volumes wrought by Mathews, John Genesis and Luke. No wonder, then, if there are to be found in these volumes inconsistencies, incongruities, and controversies. The whole message is thus further narrowed down in its value and acceptability, and its universality is, of course, out of question.

Next we come to Muhammad—his teachings and preachings—and in approaching him and his message, we approach one who spoke to humanity direct with the living Voice of God. He was practical, ideal, and mystic. The world has not produced a greater personality, a better Redeemer of humanity than Muhammad, carved out of

the very barren and burning soil of Arabia of barbarous polytheism. He was the first and last of all the Reformers, the greatest of all, who laid the solid foundation of common and universal brotherhood. He brought the worship of God into existence, not of gods and goddesses, in whose presence the pauper and the prince are alike. All should pray five times daily, shoulder to shoulder, without fail and without hesitation. A Muslim who does not observe these cardinal rules has no right to be called a follower of Islam. To Muhammad riches did not count. He was not for wealth and luxury. All his wealth was intended for charity—for the poor and for the propagation of Islam. He raised charity to a high divine act. He always took pride in poverty and to be in the company of the poor. He would feel more homely in the company of the distressed than in the company of the well-to-do believers. Are these not striking illustrations of the universal character of his teachings? No other religion has so forcibly emphasized the Unity of God and the brother-

hood of man. Islam is essentially a religion for all, a religion for humanity.

Muhammad brought the Gospel of Truth, the Holy Quran, which at the very outset says that it is the guide for the righteous ones. It is not a book of commentaries and interpolations. It contains only the direct revelations to the Prophet from God. Hence it is called the Holy Quran and the Gospel of Truth, and its appeal is universal, not confined to any particular people.

The Prophet often would roam about in the streets of Mecca exhorting and telling people thus: "O people say, 'There is but one God'." "For three years" says Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah in his book, 'Muhammad The Prophet,' "this preaching was carried on till the duty of the Prophet was emphasized by the Command: 'Make known the Command which has been given to you'." In another revelation he was ordered to warn his kinsmen. He called the men of Quraish from the heights of Safa. "O men of my clan!" he raised his voice, "If I tell you

that an army is advancing towards us from behind the hill, would you believe me?" Men eyed each other, not knowing what Muhammad's real meaning was, but they had already great faith in all matters on which Muhammad made himself heard; for he was known to all as the righteous, Al-Amin, one who spoke nothing but the truth. To this simple question put to them from Safa, they were now, however, willing to reply unreservedly: "Aye, Aye, of a truth, if you said that an army advanced towards us from the folds of Safa, we shall all believe you; for thy word has never been found to be wanting!" Muhammad declared that if they did not believe in one God, and in him as the Messenger, Allah's wrath will descend upon them. Upon this they got wroth, and shaking their heads in disapproval and disgust, they disappeared. Muhammad's Uncle was also amongst them. But Ali, the young cousin of Muhammad, did not withdraw. He was destined to be the champion of Islam and the right hand of the Apostle of Allah when under teens. He assured the Prophet to render services to him when needed, and declared his sincere

loyalty to and firm belief in the Mission of Muhammad. He was a true soldier of Islam, ever serviceable at critical times and never caring for his life. The Prophet on one occasion is reported to have said: "Ali to me is as Aaron was to Moses."

In this Book efforts are made to disclose and display at length the different qualities that the Great Prophet had possessed. Every minute incident shows how his character and conduct was exemplary, a model man in every respect, and on this basis the last revealed Book of God emphasized when it declared: "(O Believers!) You got in the Apostle of Allah the best example." This book may rightly be called the abridged edition of my big work on the Prophet entitled: "THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD THROUGH DIFFERENT LIGHTS" wherein every possible attempt is made to show the various efforts and ways of the Prophet for the upliftment of humanity. Mohammad, as the Greatest Benefactor of man, is shown through the Holy Quran and the Holy Bible, and through the opinions of many

Western and Eastern Scholars of repute and importance. I also hope to present my humble work of the above title to the world in the near future as my humble homage and offerings to that Great Soul, amidst many other mighty offerings from worthier pens.

I record my gratitude for the kindness, sympathy and encouragement of His Highness the Agha Khan, and Al-Haj Qassim Ali Jairazbhoy who has so kindly directed me in the make-up of this book, and Nawab Sir Salar Jung Bahadur of Hyderabad, Deccan. I am also thankful to Haji Gulam Husain Sajan of Bombay who has presented me with a series of Islamic books to encourage my research works. Surely Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, can alone reward them for their kindness they have done me.

<p>BOMBAY:</p> <p><i>1st April, 1933, A.D.</i></p> <p><i>5th Zul Hijjah 1351 A.H.</i></p>	}	<p>MUHAMMAD ALI</p> <p>AL-HAJ SALMIN.</p>
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1 علامہ محمد علی جناح صاحب (بایک) علامہ اقبال صاحب
2 ڈاکٹر الحاج عبداللہ محمد تارک (بایک) مولانا ابراہیم

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MUHAMMAD

THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL.

The Prophet's Childhood.

AS a child, Muhammad possessed such an extraordinarily good and exemplary character that left, no doubt, an indelible impression in the minds of his friends and guardians. Though cast in the delicate position of an orphan, (indulgence or indifference often spoiling such a child), his excellent table manners showed that he had the dignified deportment of a grown-up man. He took no part in vain and worthless sports, though he had, like other children, his juvenile pranks and games. He was good-natured, pure, truthful, serious, and sympathetic—glimpses of the future Great Prophet.

Relations with Abu Talib.

"Is my uncle's house preserved so that we might rest in it"? This was the characteristically loving question to one of his uncles when, after the fall of Mecca, he was asked

as to where he would stay. He had that genuine affection towards his guardians. Abu Talib was his gurdian, father and everything to him, and he himself was a living example of his teachings to his followers regarding respect and obedience to parents.

The remarkable incident of the Quraish Chiefs' warning to Abu Talib that he would have to suffer for the preachings of his nephew, brings out the ideal and touching relation of the latter towards the former. "My Boy, the Chiefs of Mecca have warned me. Is it not possible for you somehow to conciliate them"? What could Muhammad reply? He was more upset than his uncle. He wept and said: "Uncle, I can stand every conceivable torture, but I cannot stop proclaiming the Message of God." His firmness and faith had the desired effect. "Go your way, my boy. Do not spare proclaiming the word that God has sent you. I am with you". So said the encouraged uncle. Thus he saved his uncle and guardian from disgrace and dishonour, firmly vindicating also the Word of God.

The Prophet's Youth:

The Trusted One of his People.

Lack of self-restraint is inherent in youth, and Arabia of those days was a country of very loose moral codes. Yet the Prophet was able to preserve his youth and character unsullied, amidst such strong and tempting environments. No wonder, he earned the title of Al-Amin and As-Sadiq. And he led a strictly and positively truthful life, concealing nothing. So, his Word was accepted without question. The people of Mecca might distrust their own eyes, but not his words. He asked them: "Would you believe me, if I told you that you are in imminent danger of being attacked by an army behind this mountain"? And to him they said they would.

"You can only say something that can make a plausible impression on the people. When, for instance, you describe Muhammad as a liar, would not the people ask, 'Then why have you, for so long, sworn by his sincerity and truthfulness?' How can a man who has been truthful all his

life, suddenly turn out a liar? You have to forge a plausible account about him". This was the challenging defence of Muhammad's strict truthfulness by no less a person than an arch-enemy of his when the Meccans tried to slander the Prophet thus:—"Let us proclaim him to be a Poet. No, not a poet, but a simple liar. No, neither a Poet nor a liar, but a mad man".

It is stated by the Prophet himself how he was on two occasions somehow prevented from a desire of attending a juggler's performance. Thus, his youth as well as the rest of his life, was of undiluted purity, as attested by well-known facts of his life.

Daring solicitude For the Poor.

His solicitude for the poor and the down-trodden was something unparalleled, and even after becoming a Prophet he continued to be one of the Founders of the Hilf-~~Ul~~-Fazul, a League founded by some Meccans to protect the rights of the poor, willing even as a Prophet to serve

under others for the cause of the poor. "The idea of this League is so dear to me that if it were to be initiated even to-day, I should gladly join it". This was his characteristic reply to his taunters. Once he had the moral courage to face, at the risk of his own life, his bitterest enemy in Mecca named Abu Jahal who did not care to pay off some money which he owed to a poor man. Approaching the Prophet, the poor man appealed to him thus:—"You are one of the Leaders who took this oath to protect the poor. Why not then ask Abu Jahal to make repayment of the money he owes me"? Accordingly the Prophet knocked at Abu Jahal's door. "Who is there?" was the enquiry from within. "Muhammad" went the reply. Startled, Abu Jahal at once opened the door.

Abu Jahal—"Is anything wrong?"

The Prophet—"Why do you not pay off this man"?

And the amount was readily paid to the man then and there.

“Would you not believe me? As soon as I opened the door I saw as though Muhammad had two wild camels with him, one on his right, and the other on his left, and the beasts seemed ready to run at me”. This was what he told his friends. Truth has its terror and the incident shows how the Prophet was keenly anxious to protect the poor.

The Prophet's unquestioned

Trustworthiness.

Al-Amin, meaning the Trusted One, was a significantly appropriate title awarded to the Prophet. He inherited nothing, had absolutely nothing when he married Khadija and he desired nothing even though he had power to get it, ever quite content with the little he had. And he continued to be poor. Even with all his poverty, he was trusted with the safe custody of life and property. On one occasion while he was distributing money to the poor, he dropped a *dinar* and forgot to take it up. Finishing his prayers in the mosque, he got up immediately and went straight home, forcing

his way across rows of worshippers. On his return his bewildered companions enquired: "What was the matter O Prophet of God"? "I had dropped a *dinar*, and having remembered it, I wanted to give it away, as soon as I could", was the reply.

"Do you not like that you and I should belong to the same class"? Thus he consoled some of his poor companions when they complained about the richness of others. He lived in poverty even when he was rich, distributing everything, in the name of God, to the poor. For months together there would be practically no cooking in his house. He kept up to his ideal till the end, wealth making no difference in him.

The Prophet's Married Life.

We know how his single life was singularly ideal and pure. He married only at the age of twenty-five a comparatively late age for Arabia, and that too a widow of forty.

Khadija's whole wealth was at his

disposal. He used it for getting slaves free which is another instance of his high moral character.

His Marriage with Aisha.

This marriage was considered something tyrannical to Aisha who was then only nine years old, whereas the Prophet was an old man.

Aisha's Own Testimony.

First of all, it is wrong to say that Aisha was only nine at the time of her marriage, and amidst all the conflicting accounts, thirteen may be safely put as her age then. But the most important point is as to how she herself felt her married life. Though she became a widow by twenty-two, a peep into her life discloses her unmixed and permanent love for the Prophet. Gifts of lakhs and lakhs of Rupees poured in to her, but she continued to have the same simple life, giving away everything in charity. Once in the course of a day she gave away about a lakh of rupees. Hearing this, a girl friend of her said to her thus :—
“You are observing a fast to-day, my dear,

you might spare at least three or four annas for your evening meal". Once she had for her meal, very soft *Chapaties* which she ate with tears. Asked by a friend of her as to why she wept, she said:— "I was thinking of the Prophet, that is what made me weep. Were he alive, I would have served him to-day with this soft bread". So, she remembered the Prophet and such was her deep love for him. Wealth and widow-hood made no change in her.

Courtesies To Wives.

His was an ideal family life. In so many small ways, by little acts of courtesy, he kept up the warmth of loving relations with his wives, as for instance, drinking from the same cup as they drank.

Lesson To Hussan.

Once a quantity of dates came for public charity. The Prophet's grandson, Hussan, put one date into his mouth. The Prophet took it out from his mouth saying, "No, it is not for you, it is for the poor".

This shows how severe and strict he was in his principles that had no exceptions.

Even Fatima Not Exempted.

Fatima was the Prophet's beloved daughter and she was extraordinarily good. One day, in distress, with callosities on her hands, owing to grinding her own corn, she approached her father and said: "Can't I have a maid to help me? - now that we are so well off". The Prophet consoling her said: "Come Fatima, I will give you something even better"; and he gave her a few wise words to reflect upon. Even her beloved daughter must work herself. Such was his strict principle.

The Prophet At Taif.

His wonderful forbearance towards the tyrannies of his enemies shows his large-heartedness and real greatness. When he went to preach at Taif, he was insulted as a mad man. Street boys were set upon him who volleyed him with stones, and swift dogs ran furiously at him, and he was wounded from head to foot. He heard

(II)

the voice of God saying that Divine punishment would descend upon them if he so desired. "No, they are an ignorant lot" was the Prophet of Allah's remark.

Amnesty To All Mecca.

"This day, no blame attaches to you". These were his noble words to the Meccans on the occasion of his victorious re-entry into Mecca, to those people who had insulted him, who had torn asunder his companions in the most cruel way and who had murdered his women-folk most barbarously. Thus he dealt with his bitterest enemies. He helped his enemies ungrudgingly.

Another Incident.

The Prophet was once sleeping under a tree, and his sword was hanging from one of the branches. Taking the sword in his hand in order to avail himself of this chance, an unrelenting enemy approached him and asked, "who can save you now"? "Allah", was the prompt and simple reply. The man was unnerved, and

he dropped the weapon from his hand. Taking it up the Prophet asked him, "who can save you"? The other could only reply, "It lies with you to spare me or not". Of course, he was sent away unharmed. Once the Prophet got very angry when he saw a wounded woman on the enemy's side. It was his special injunction to Muslim combatants not to touch women, children, old men, the disabled or diseased, nor monks or priests of any denomination.

The Prophet's Many-Sidedness.

He was a judge in whom people had full confidence.

He was a military Commander who committed no blunders and who taught the world many things regarding the strategy and ethics of warfare.

He preached without temper and bitterness and was not unnecessarily clever or sharp-tongued.

Martial Daring with Passion for Peace.

He was ever ready for peace, accepting the humblest terms, but truly daring

in fighting. In the battle of Honein he was left to fight with a band of twelve men, (the rest took to flight) and even some of these persuaded the Prophet to run away. They said, "to stay here is to plunge ourselves outright into destruction". But the Prophet answered "Leave me alone. I cannot show my back to the enemy". He even boldly proclaimed, "I am a Prophet; I am no false one. I am of the Progeny of Abdul Muttalib". Of his valiant character a companion reports thus:- "In the battle of Ohod I saw one who was drenched in blood. From every side he was being attacked and alone he encountered these attacks. When I went near I found he was no other than the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of God)". His companions thought that the peace of Hodaibiyya was too humiliating to them. He, the truly valiant, knew the value and ways of peace.

In commercial affairs, he had a high sense of integrity.

Dealings with the Poor.

"I am not niggardly; if I had any-

thing I would have gladly given you of it". Such was the calm reply that the Prophet gave to a man who asked him for something, putting a rope round his neck. He had at that time ten thousand men with him. What would be the fate of the man, if he had showed signs of displeasure? This is rare magnanimity.

Dealings with the Chiefs and Earthly Potentates.

Muhammad had to deal with Nobles, Chiefs, Kings and others. Towards all these and towards the poor, he bore himself with equal dignity. Once he was talking and listening to a poor old woman for a long time, while Ambassadors were waiting to see him. Herein we see the Prophet in the man. The Governor of Yemen, according to the order of the Persian Monarch had sent two men for the arrest of Muhammad. The men said: "We will try to see that no harm comes to you, but to refuse on your part to go will be disastrous. Chosroes rules over half the world and if angered, he will

work destruction in the whole of Arabia". The Prophet fixed a day to give reply and then told them to go and tell their Governor that his (Muhammad's) God had killed the Governor's Monarch. What he said turned out to be true, which shows he was a true Prophet of God who could be firm and fearless towards a Monarch and who also knew how to show deference to a poor old woman.

Dealings with Foreigners.

He made Salman, the Persian, quite at ease and comfortable among Muslims. He said to his companions, "Salman is one of our own kin".

The Prophet's Kinship To Non-Muslims.

A Muslim is rightly inspired by the Prophet's teachings. But what about a non-Muslim who may not believe in his Apostleship? what affinity or sense of kinship can he discover in the life of our Holy Prophet?

Rehabilitation Of Earlier Teachings.

All non-Muslims can regard Muhammad

as one of their own, inasmuch as his teaching in the Quran is, after all, an embodiment in the best form of whatever his forerunners, the other Prophets, had said.

All Teachers Acknowledged.

The Quran has testified of Prophets thus:—"There has not been a nation but having had a warner". Muhammad is a Brother Prophet, a kinsman to the other Prophets, to Ramachandra, Krishna, Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster and Confucius. He and his teachings belong to all the nations of the world. He is one among us.

Sensitiveness To Others' Distress.

The words, "Hard for him to bear is your distress", signify how the Prophet was keenly alive to the distress of others, and how he was ever solicitous about their moral and spiritual uplift.

Incident About Abu Bakr.

On one occasion Abu Bakr was talking to a Jew, whom he gave a blow because he claimed superiority for Moses over

others. The Jew thereupon lodged a complaint to the Prophet who admonished Abu Bakr saying: "Don't quarrel for my superiority over others". This is a definite proof of his sense of respect for others, and of his sincere desire that all should respect the Great Teachers without speaking lightly of them. In strict terms he further forbids to abuse idols. "Do not talk disrespectfully of others' idols for their worshippers will in their turn talk disrespectfully of Allah." Here is a high ideal and a rare delicacy of thought and feeling.

Respect for Feelings of the Enemy.

Muhammad taught about fair and just dealing in time of war. He himself ever consented to make peace when the enemy showed slightest jesture for it. The Muslims, in later age, in obedience to their beloved Prophets' command, have never rejected offers of peace as History corroborates, which shows a practical effect of his teachings on his faithful followers. In laying down the terms of peace of Hodaibiya, the disbelievers objected to the wording, "Prophet of God." He therefore himself scored it out

as his scribe was unwilling to do it. So peace-loving he was that he always wished to be at peace with all. He was never obstinate for or stubborn on anything.

**The Prophet's Solicitude for the
Oppressed, Slaves, Women and the
Depressed Classes.**

Hard as it was for him to endure to see others in distress, the Prophet brought freedom to slaves, women, and the depressed classes. It was a glorious and noble task performed by him during an age, when slave killing was not considered heinous! Worst aspects of slavery were done away with, and freedom and better treatment to them was secured.

Solicitude For Women.

Women were equally treated as slaves. They were considered as chattels. Infant girls were buried alive. In short the wretched were the whole lot of them. The Prophet preached "The best among you is he who is best towards his womenfolk". He explained the supreme necessity of proper education

and good moral training for daughters, and laid much stress on it.

Solicitude for the Depressed Classes.

The Prophet rightly championed the cause of the depressed classes. None were high or low in the eyes of God, high moral excellence being the only sure determining factor of rank and honour. "The high in rank in God's view are those who are high in morals".

There is no high or low,
For all are same below;
But sterling worth has rank,
And sure tall talk is blank.

National Rivalries Condemned.

"It does not become an advanced people to look down upon another less advanced. It is possible, to-morrow the advanced may come to a fall and the less advanced go forward. This has been so from the earliest times. Sometimes one people, and sometimes another come to the fore-front.

Therefore treat one another with respect". These words from the Quran show the Prophet condemned the feeling of the so-called national superiority.

In brief, he and his teachings were for humanity, and his conception of humanity was so grand that it was free from all defects. Hence the significant words, "Hard it is for him to bear your distress."

He had the world's heart,
He knew the world's heart,
His was humanity
Of real divinity.

Solicitude For Ends, Not for Means.

The Prophet was not particular about the success of his teachings or the victory of his principle. He was not for vain and worthless self-glorification. Widest and maximum human good was his chief concern and care. He was "solicitous about us". His was the religion for humanity.

Islamic Teaching Provides For Suitable Alternatives.

The Islamic teaching is wonderfully

adaptable and elastic, suited to all sorts of people in all conditions of life, based upon the general good and welfare of humanity. One may pray sitting or even lying according to circumstances. No specific amount is fixed for charity. There are alternatives for fasting, pilgrimage, and legal alms. All may not be able to go on a *Jahud*, and there are the crippled and the maimed who cannot dream of such a spiritual enterprise. This is what the Prophet says:—
 “There are people who have not joined us, but there is no valley that we cross, in which they are not present with us, and no reward that we reap in which they are not our co-sharers. I was thinking of the maimed and the crippled, who grieve in their hearts over their inability to join *Jahud*. Allah will not withhold from them the reward for actually joining it”.
 This promises salvation and hope for all.

Thankful To Those Whom He Serves.

This great quality of the Prophet is summed up in the words: “to the believers compassionate, merciful”. He is thank-

ful to others while actually others are under a deep debt of obligation for his teachings. He does not wait for any acknowledgment from others.

This is the highest pinnacle of spiritual greatness which is devoid of any personal greatness or self-gratification. He was a *Rasul* or messenger with inspired messages from Heaven. He was great in every respect. He was great from the beginning to the end.

The Prophet's Sanctity.

It may be argued that Muhammad's power and influence was such that people were afraid to speak anything against him. But there are testimonials from trustworthy persons who have spoken about him after his death.

What does Ayesha say about the Prophet? Her testimonial is doubly valuable. She had not enjoyed under him a life of ease and pleasure. She was not even sure of her daily food. Yet she says: "He was the embodiment of all moral virtues described in the Quran".

Though she became a widow, in the prime of her youth, the Holy Prophet's life and character had so much impressed her that often she thought of him and wept whenever she tasted something good. "The Prophet of God died and he never ate white bread. Now that I am eating it, it sticks in my throat. Had the Holy Prophet now been living, I would have prepared it for him", She sobbed out.

Testimony Of His Successors.

The testimony from his successors is another important and reliable source, pointing out to the nature of the strong moral and spiritual tie that bound them to him.

During the time of Abu Bakr, the first successor of the Prophet, all Arabia rose in revolt, refusing to pay taxes. To quell the rebellion, Abu Bakr was advised by his companions to call back the Army sent to the Syrian Frontier by the Prophet before his death. Abu Bakr had such a veneration for the Prophet and his doings that he answered thus his

advisors:— "It is beyond the power of Abu Quhafa's son to stop the army sent by the Prophet of God from proceeding to the place which the Prophet had fixed for it. By God, even if the enemy should capture Medina, murder our women and children and the beasts and birds of prey should feast on their dead bodies, I will not stop the army despatched by the Prophet to proceed to Syrian frontier. This incident certainly proves how truthful, righteous and influential the Prophet was and how his doings were respected by his disciples and companions even after his death.

That Omar, The Prophet's second Successor, desired that he should be buried at the feet of his Master is in itself a great homage and tribute paid to that great soul.

The Prophet's third Caliph, Usman had such a regard for and confidence in the Prophet that he rather preferred to risk his own life, than to follow the advice of the Governor of Syria, his

near relative, who smelling plot against the life and throne of Usman, suggested to him to send out to the distant provinces of the Empire, some of the respected and prominent companions of the Prophet. "How can I scatter whom the Messenger of God had brought together". This was his reply, which bears testimony for the moral influence exerted by the Prophet over his Successors.

Ali was the Prophet's nearest relative whose whole life bears evidence to the truthfulness and honesty of the Prophet.

A Sane Inference.

It is easy for persons coming after centuries to find fault with the Prophet. But the testimony borne by eye-witnesses, including his wives, friends, disciples and others who had better chances to know him more closely, intimately and personally, must be given a decidedly higher credence and worth. Keeping this method of judgment in view, we find in the Prophet a mighty moral force of rare excellence.

Prophet's love for His Creator.

In the battle of Ohud many Muslims were wounded and the Prophet himself and his Companions, Abu Bakr, Omar and others were lying severely wounded, and all of them were keeping strict silence as instructed by the Prophet. Thinking all of them were dead, one of the Meccan Chief spoke out the following challenging and insulting words:—"Where is Muhammad who claimed to be the Prophet of God?" Receiving no reply he continued, "We have killed Muhammad, but where is Abu Bakr?" Still receiving no reply, he repeated, "Abu Bakr is killed too, but where is Omar?" Yet, there was no reply. Then came the enemy's challenge and insult to God Himself, extolling idols and images in the following words:—"Glory be to Hubal! Who conferred victory on us." This was too much for the Prophet who at last broke his silence saying, "Why don't you say, God alone is worthy to be exalted and Glorified." So deeply he loved Allah, the Almighty.

Fruits of the Prophet's Labours.

Such persons as Abu Bakr, Omar, Usman, and Ali themselves stand testimony to the irreproachable life and character of the Prophet; for, all their greatness, goodness, piety, truthfulness, etc., are, after all, a reflection of those qualities in their Master in much higher a degree. Only a greater soul could have produced such great disciples. That the Christian writers should extol the greatness of Abu Bakr and Omar, exhibiting at the same time undiluted prejudice against the Prophet, is therefore, **ipso facto**, baseless and meaningless.

Leaving aside the much misunderstood Usman who had a blameless and beautiful character, let us take the case of Ali, the Prophet's own son-in-law who was living with him and who was so closely and intimately connected with him. All of his goodness, godliness, and selflessness must reflect credit on him who moulded Ali to such a creditable character. If these qualities were independently acquired, how should Ali be so sincere and loyal to him. In fact, the

great Prophet not only so wonderfully moulded and influenced the character of his Caliphs, but raised a whole nation from the lowest depths of degradation. Even Jews and Christians preferred Muslim rule, with its fairness, justice and equity.

It was a magical change that he wrought in Arabia—a desert land of uncivilised and barbarous people, full of vices. Does not all this show the Prophet to be a very great soul?

Some Charges Refuted.

It is said that Muhammad's teaching about divorce, polygamy, and slavery, has done more harm than good, and he is severely criticised regarding reforms in these directions.

By now in all countries divorce has been recognised as a necessity in Society, which is all the more an evidence how salutary is the divorce—reform introduced by the Prophet to the world.

As regards Polygamy, it is not a compulsory rule in Islam, but it is a necessary

provision against profligacy and prostitution, and even against dissatisfaction of man with one wife. One wife is in itself not objectionable and bad, but too much indulgence is certainly bad.

Accessories of Licentiousness.

Licentiousness implies certain things. A licentious person is necessarily a drunkard. He is fond of dainty, palatable dishes. He lives in luxury, loves music of low type and unmarried girls, seeking younger and more beautiful ones than his wives, and is anxious to satisfy his carnal desires.

The Holy Prophet was singularly free from all these vices.

W i n e .

It was Muhammad who for the first time totally prohibited the use of wine under any circumstances. Religious reformers before his time had advocated a restricted use of it. Priests, pandits and philosophers were using it and it was even considered an essential element in performing the religious rites. It cannot, therefore, be argued that he wanted

to show his religious piety by prohibiting its use.

Ever since he became a Prophet, his life was full of cares and anxieties, which poured fourth on him from his enemies throughout the land. Yet he did not think it necessary to use wine to drown his anxieties in it. Nor could he think of making it lawful on that account. His total prohibition of the use of wine shows what a pure, and strong character he had!

This one reform alone, O Prophet pure!

Must, mong the great to thee a place assure.

Delicious And Dainty Dishes.

"Scores of times we went absolutely without food, many times we lived on dates and as many times only on water" says Ayesha. On the day of the Prophet's death the people of his household were actually starving. So simple and selfless was his living, all his income being spent in charity.

Beautiful Furniture.

A lamb's skin used as bed for both himself and his wife was the only furniture in the Prophet's house. This is what Ayesha says:—"We had only one bed in our house on which we slept together and when the Prophet rose for his night-prayer, he would say it in the same bed and I had to contract my legs to make room for him".

Virgin Girls.

The mere fact of the plurality of marriages that the Prophet had to contract under certain circumstances does not prove that he was licentious and lustful. That he married only women of advanced years is in itself a proof to show that he was anything but licentious. He became a Prophet and was the ruler of a powerful state. Virgin girls did offer themselves their hands to him. He could have married such beautiful girls if he ever licentiously desired it. He married only one virgin girl, Ayesha. Why did he marry her? It was the sincerity, the steadfast loyalty, and the

invincible faith of her father, Abu Bakr that induced him to marry her. Of this even Irving admits that "Upon this wife thus chosen in the very blossom of years the Prophet doted more than upon any of those whom he subsequently married."

There is a close affinity between music and sensuality. The Prophet discouraged and denounced music to the point of prohibition, which is another proof of his strong moral character.

The conquests made by Islam had made the Muslims rich, and just like the wives of others the Prophet's wives belonging to high and noble families, also naturally desired a little more comfort and convenience in life. But neither wealth nor anything else could induce the Prophet to change his strict standard and ideal of life. His reply to their request is given in the Quran in the following words:—"O Prophet! say to your wives; if you desire this world's life and its ornament, then come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departure. And if you desire Allah and his

Apostles and the latter abode, then surely Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward". (32, 28).

The Prophet thus explained to his wives that he, as a religious teacher, could not think of comfort in life and that they would get all the comforts of life after his death, if they bore with him patiently during his existence. If they wanted to enjoy life earlier, they must find it somewhere else. And as a matter of fact they later did enjoy the comforts of life after the Prophet's death. Such was the Prophet's strict and austere life.

His dealings with all of his wives were equally fair and just, without being partial or favourably inclined to some of them. Even during his last illness, with all the sufferings, he gave them all equal treatment and chances to serve and nurse him.

The mere fact that the Prophet married so many wives does not prove that he was licentious. These marriages had their own social significance and moral purpose

of bringing women to an equal status of man.

The Prophet's whole life was entirely devoted to religious cause, and he could not afford to spend his valuable time to enjoy the company of women. These marriages meant only to augment his troubles and strain on him, which he ever bore cheerfully and patiently, to meet still higher and nobler end.

Now that the attitude of the Prophet towards his wives is made pretty clear, it can also be proved why he gave permission to his followers placed under similar circumstances to have more than one wife. Infact he meant no injustice to woman-kind. On the other hand, this wholesome institution was the very basis of the welfare of Muslim Community, as well the basis of its moral and social uplift.

The Prophet and The Slaves.

That the Prophet by allowing slavery perpetuated an utter justice to one section of mankind is another charge against him

and Islam. But the general nature of his dealing with slaves and the attitude of the slaves themselves towards him strongly repudiate this charge.

The first thing that the Prophet did after marrying Khadija was to set free all her slaves. Can this be the act of a lover of slavery? On the other hand, does this not show that he was their benefactor, and anxious for their welfare and freedom? This fact is corroborated if we examine the general attitude of the slaves themselves towards him and his faith. Out of the forty believers he had in the first seven years of his Prophethood, fifteen were slaves or descendants of slaves. In proportion to the number of believers, a large majority of them came from that class, which is a positive proof of how they considered him as their benefactor and emancipator. Besides it was slaves who suffered and sacrificed most for the cause of the Holy Prophet. Khubab, a slave and an ironmonger by profession, one of the earliest believers, underwent all sorts of inhuman physical tortures at the hands of

his persecutors, and suffered from heavy monetary losses, yet his faith remained unshaken and firm in Islam.

The Prophet Emancipates Zaid.

"I have already set him free, he is at perfect liberty to go with you if he so desires". This was the answer that the Prophet gave to the father and the Uncle of Zaid, (Zaid bin Harisa who belonging to a Christian tribe, was one of the slaves of Khadija) when they made a request to him to set Zaid free. But Zaid preferred to live with the Prophet and did not want freedom. He said to his father, "Muhammad is both father and mother to me. I cannot part company with him". In fact he was one of the first to believe in his Master's Prophethood. Nothing but an exemplary treatment could so influence a slave.

Bilal Suffers For The Prophet.

The slave Bilal was another early convert to Islam who living in bondage with Omayya, an implacable enemy of the

Prophet, bore with remarkable patience all inhuman persecutions. He was made to lie on burning sand and was tied with rope and dragged by urchins through the streets of Mecca. But he did not renounce his faith which only grew stronger by persecution and which made him repeat all the more firmly in the very face of his persecutors that "God is one, there is only one God". He was one of the most devoted followers of the Prophet among the slaves.

Ammar And His Mother Tortured.

Sumayya, a female slave, was the fourth among the most devoted followers of the Prophet. Terrible were the trials that she underwent at the hands of Abu Jahal for the cause of Islam, laying down her life as the price of her unshakable sincerity. This is the case of a female slave standing faithful to the Prophet's cause, and a striking example of the attitude of the slave class towards him and his faith.

Ammar, the son of Sumayya, was another helpless victim at the hands of the

Prophet's enemies. Suhaib, a Roman slave who also believed in the Holy Prophet, suffered untold hardships. Abu Fakeeh, one of the early converts to Islam, was made to lie on burning sand. One day as he was being dragged, an animal happened to pass by him, and his master taunted him by saying that it was his (Abu Fakeeh's) God. He answered the taunt with "Your God and mine is the one Supreme Being, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth". This answer all the more enraged his master who almost killed him by strangling him and by placing a heavy stone on his chest.

Labina was another female among the band of the faithful who was much harassed by Omar for her unflinching faith. Zaneena was still another who was for the firmness of her faith mercilessly beaten and even her eyes were put out. Nahdia and Onme Obais were other female slaves who suffered much for the sake of Islam. Amir bin Fohera was also subjected to all sorts of sufferings and hardships. Hamama and her son, Bilal, too contributed their quota

of suffering. There were other numerous slaves who stood firm by Islam.

Hamza Accepted Islam.

“You always brag of your courage and bravery, don’t you see how Abu Jahal distresses and torments your Nephew?” This was the taunt thrown at Hamza by his non-Muslim slave girl, because she witnessed one day Abu Jahal abusing the Prophet and even going so far as to beat him. Enraged and exasperated beyond measure, he went to the assembly of the Qureish where he stood casting angry glances on them. Observing him in such an unusual state of mind, Abu Jahal said: “What is it, Hamza? You seem to be bent upon fighting with somebody”. Hamza rushed at him instantly, and giving a slap on his face exclaimed: “Abu Jahal, thy tyrannies to Muhammad transcend bounds of decency. I declare myself to be a Muslim from now, and I challenge thee to have a trial of strength with me if thou darest”. The heart of Abu Jahal quailed at the challenge, and but for his lucky silence he would have been knocked down to the ground and

reduced to bones. Hamza accepted Islam soon after this occurrence.

An inescapable inference.

Hence, the inevitable inference is that Islam stood for the emancipation and liberation of the oppressed slaves, who clearly understanding the faith in this true spirit were almost the first devoted band of people to come forward and suffer the utmost for it, exhibiting an extraordinarily unflinching faith in the cause.

Such was the effect of the Prophet's teaching on slavery, that brought about a turning point in their history, marking the date of their emancipation. How strange is it that people coming centuries afterwards should think of criticising the Prophet! Are they better judges than those who actually took an active part in the struggle?

Islam on Slavery.

It is an undoubted fact, that of all the Great Prophets and social reformers that the world has ever produced, Muhammad,

the Prophet, must be given the foremost place for contributing the maximum quota for the moral and social uplift of humanity. He was an avowed friend of the oppressed who did his utmost for them condemning the practice of slavery in strong and unequivocal terms. It was against his highest conception of brotherhood and humanity to consider a section of people as mere chattels. In fact Islam has played no small part in the abolition of slavery.

Slavery was then a part and parcel of the fabric of human society. Revolting and repugnant as the system undoubtedly was to his highest conception of humanity, he keenly felt those slaves' miserable lot in life, which was devoid of freedom and action of any kind. Yet the Prophet could not immediately abolish the long-standing, abominable system. It was neither practicable nor possible for him then. So he could only lay down precepts and injunctions to do away with slavery effectively, though gradually.

Slavery Before Islam.

Before the advent of Muhammad, slavery

was existing in various countries in different forms—in the Roman and Persian Empires, in India, China and Europe, and among the Greeks, the Jews and the Christians. Slavery, was then an organized profession. Children were sold into slavery, and they were carried off to be sold as slaves. Those kidnapped by pirates were reduced to slavery. Prisoners of war became slaves, Children of slaves along with their parents were the property of their masters. It was the Prophet who dealt a death-blow to this wicked system. His well-known commandments proclaimed thus:—“No free man henceforth is to be turned into a slave. The reduction of a free man to slavery is tantamount to murder. God will not accept the worship of a person who reduces a free man to slavery, and He will seek redress against this wrong as His Own on the Day of Judgment.” There was one exception, one form of pardonable slavery in Islam permissible, that is those who fought against Islam and who were taken as prisoners of war, were deprived of their freedom.

The Quran on Prisoners of War.

Even with regard to these prisoners of

war, many were set at liberty by the Prophet as sheer acts of favour, and only in certain particular cases redemption was demanded. The Quran says:—"When you meet in battle those who do not believe, smite their necks until you have overcome them, and made them prisoners, though afterward either you may set them free as a favour or let them ransom themselves until war terminates." (47 : 4).

Detailed Instructions about slaves.

We have already noted the Prophet's instructions of a general nature regarding the betterment of the condition of slaves. He also further laid down certain detailed instructions and directions aiming at the betterment of the moral and social condition of the slaves, leading up to their enfranchisement. There were also instructions of a permanent nature for the complete extinction of slavery in any form existing on earth. The following are some of the recommendations from the Quran regarding this matter.

- (I) "Be good to parents, to near relatives, to orphans, to the needy,

to the neighbours, to the companions in a journey, to the way-farer, and to **those whom your right hands possess.**" (4 : 36).

- (2) "And do not marry infidel women till they believe. A believing slave-girl is better than an unbelieving free woman, even though you may like her; and do not marry unbelieving men till they believe and a believing slave is better than an unbelieving free man even though you may like him." (2 : 221).

- (3) "And they (Mulsim women) should not display their ornaments and decorations but to their husbands**or to those whom their right hands possess.**" (24 ; 31).

From these verses it is clear that the slaves are to be treated well, to be regarded as respectable members of society, to be treated as nearest relatives, and to be had as relations by marriage just to improve their status.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said further as follows ;—

- (4) "Your slaves are your brothers, so if a person happens to possess a slave, he should dress him with the same clothing which he himself uses and give him the same food he eats himself; and if he is given a work to do which may be too much for him, he should be helped and assisted by the owner."
- (5) "And let none of you say 'my slave, my slave-girl', but should say, 'my man, my woman' and let not the slave say, 'my sab, my master' but ask him to say, 'my chief, my superior'.
- (6) "Abu Nawar relates that one day Ali came to his shop with a slave. He bought two shirts and asked his slave to choose any one of the two. He chose one and the other Ali kept for himself."

Thus, the Prophet saw to the proper treatment of the slaves, saw that they were properly clothed and fed like others, and laid down rules as to how to address them.

All these were done with a view to improve their social status and condition. These instructions and recommendations became, so to say, the bed-rock of their social and political rights. For instance, read the following:—

- (a) Abu Masud Abulqadri says:—"Once I beat my slave with a stick when I heard someone calling me from behind and saying what a wicked thing I was doing. In the heat of the moment, I did not recognise the voice and went on beating the slave. The man calling me from behind, in the meantime, approached me and I saw that he was no other person than the Holy Prophet. Upon seeing him the stick fell from my hand. The Prophet looked towards me with angry looks and said 'Abu Masud, there is a God over your head Who has greater power over you than what you have over your slave'. I said, 'O Prophet of God I set him free'.

The Prophet replied, 'if you had not done it, the fire of hell would have burnt your face'."

(h) A slave came to the Prophet and said, "My Master had married me to one of his slave-girls. Now he wishes to dissolve that marriage". The Prophet thereupon made it clear to the Muslims that no one could compel a slave to divorce his married slave-girl and that only the husband could do it.

(c) Caliph Omar in his weekly tour of Medina and its neighbourhood saw that heavy work was not given to slaves.

These are, in brief, the rights that slaves enjoy in Islam. The methods adopted for the gradual, but full liberty of these slaves were (a) Recommendatory, and (b) Compulsory.

(a) In the Quran there are a good many verses pointing out to the liberation of slaves as being a pious and meritorious act, bringing man nearer

to God. The following are a few of them :—

- (1) “ And what will make you comprehend what the uphill road in the way of religion is, by treading along which man can attain to the heights of God’s nearness. It is setting the slaves at liberty.” (90-12, 13.)
- (2) “ But righteousness consists in one should believe in Allah, the last day, the angels, the books and the Prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near relatives, to the orphans, to the needy, to the way-farer, to the beggars and to the captors for the freedom of their captives.”—(2 : 177.)
- (3) According to Abu Horeira the Prophet said :—“ Whosoever sets free a Muslim slave, God will wholly save him from hell-fire.”
- (4) A person wanted to know from the Prophet as to what deed would take him straight to paradise. The Prophet suggested to him to set free a slave.

- (5) The Prophet said, "He who gets a slave-girl, educates her and then marries her, will be doubly rewarded."

The Quran has suggested the manumission of slaves as a way of doing penance for sins. Read the following:—

- (a) "And whoever kills a believer by mistake, **he should free a believing slave** and blood-money should also be paid to the relatives of the deceased unless they remit it as alms; but he who cannot find a slave should fast for two months successively—a penance from Allah."—(4 : 92.)
- (b) "And if the person killed belongs to a tribe which is hostile to the Muslims, while he himself is a **believer, the freeing of a slave will only suffice.**"—(4 : 92).
- (c) "And if he is from a tribe between whom and you there is a covenant, the blood-money should be paid to

his relatives and a believing slave should also be freed.”—(4 : 92).

- (d) “Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He calls you to account for taking of deliberate oaths, whose expiation is the feeding and clothing of ten poor men out of the food and clothing you feed and dress your family with, or the clothing **and feeding of a slave.**” (5 : 89).
- (e) “And as for those who put away their wives by calling them as their mothers, they should free a slave before they touch each other,..... But whoever does not find a slave, let him fast for two months successively before they touch each other. And who has no power to fast should feed sixty poor men.”—(58 : 3, 4).
- (f) Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr, relates that the Holy Prophet had ordered the Muslims to free slaves at the time of the eclipse of the Sun.

The above verses quoted make it clear that the liberation of slaves so much stressed in the Quran aims at the complete abolition of slavery, and gives the whole matter a religious colour. Even the alternatives suggested aim at the same goal. Slavery would have been completely wiped off, if only all the Muslims had imbibed the true spirit of these teachings.

Some Compulsory Methods.

While the recommendatory instructions that slaves should be properly fed and clothed and that they should not be given heavy work, did undoubtedly aim at the betterment of the status and condition of the slaves, they were, at the same time, too evasive and indefinite. So, the Prophet wanted to give a colour of compulsion. He said: "Let no one beat his slave. And if one happens to do so, he should compensate for this moral delinquency by freeing him." Sawaid, a Companion of the Prophet relates: "We were seven brothers and we had our slaves. One of us was so inconsiderate as to give his slave a slap on his

face in a fit of anger. When the Holy Prophet came to know of this he ordered us to manumit him." Similarly Ibne Omar, one of the Prophet's greatest and most learned Companions says: "A person who beats his slave, and then emancipates him, will deserve no reward for this act of him, as Islam has laid down the immediate freeing of the beaten slave as the compensation for such a reprehensible act"—(The Muslim Kitab-ul-Iman).

The Prophet has said that a person ceases to be a slave if he is closely related to his owner.

"The Prophet said" relates Ibn-i-Omar, "If a man sharing a slave in company with some other persons manumits his share of the slave, it becomes obligatory for him to secure his full manumission by paying to the other parties the price of their shares. But if he does not possess the required amount of money the slave shall be considered free from that time so that he should earn it to pay them off; and the slave shall have to be provided

with all possible facilities to buy his freedom."

Some slaves, it is said, belonging to the Meccans sought refuge from their owners with the Prophet at Medina. The owners approached the Prophet to get back their run-away slaves, some Muslims also speaking in their behalf. But the much enraged Prophet said, "They are set at liberty by Allah, how can I send them back into slavery"—(Abu Dawood, Kitab-ul-Jahad).

The Holy Prophet said, "If a person marries a slave-girl whom he does not liberate, and if she gives birth to a child of him, she automatically becomes free. Even the slave mother of a dead baby just born of a free father will become free."

The above sayings bring out the following facts:—

- (a) The beating of a slave results in his freedom.
- (b) Close blood-relationship of the slave with his master means his unqualified freedom.

- (c) A slave free in part is necessarily free in whole.
- (d) A run-away slave from his master is free.
- (e) A slave-girl married to a free man becomes free, even if she gives birth to a dead baby.

Through all these regulations, recommendations and commandments, the Prophet was bent upon blotting out slavery of every form from the face of the earth. Hence there is no doubt that Islam's share in the emancipation of slaves is a classical achievement.

Contract With The Slaves.

"Those of your slaves who wish to enter into a written contract with you, should be freed by making with them the contract they ask for, if you realise that by achieving their freedom they will become useful members of the Muslim Society; and help them to secure their freedom with the wealth which God out of his infinite grace and mercy has given

you." This formula of a civil contract mentioned in the Quran points out the way of freedom for a slave, a definite amount of money or labour being fixed as the price of freedom. The conditions and stipulations of such a contract were decided by the state, and not by the owner of the slave. This was an excellent arrangement made by Islam to secure freedom for a slave. To effect freedom by a mere stroke of the pen would have been certainly disastrous.

The following incident proves how the making of such a contract was in the hands of the state and that the matter was not left to the owner of the slave.

Ans, one of the Prophet's companions, had a slave named Sireen who wanted to obtain his freedom by a payment of money according to the civil contract. But Ans did not consent to it even after the intervention of Omar, the Head of the Muslim State. Ans was duly punished for breaking the Islamic law, and the slave obtained his freedom.

Abu Horeira relates how the Prophet was enamoured of this system. He says, "The Prophet said that God has taken upon himself to help three persons:—first, a slave who had entered into a contract with his master and is anxious to pay off the stipulated amount; second, a person who seeks to get married in order to be safe from the onslaughts of carnal passions and lastly one who endeavours in the way of God."

For the emancipation of slaves, the state was also enjoined to set a part of its treasury. The Quran says:—

"Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials appointed to collect them, and those who are interested in Islam and have not yet accepted it or having accepted it are too weak in their faith, and **for the ransoming of captives**, and those in debt and in the way of Allah and the way-farer. This is an ordinance from God." (60 : 9).

The Prophet even went further, not being merely satisfied by granting freedom

to a slave. On him was conferred an equal status with his master. He was called the friend of his former master. He could inherit the latter's property if he happened to die heirless, and he could also, if he died heirless, leave his property to him. The Prophet said:—

“If a freed slave should die heirless, his property would go to his former owner,” (Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Itaq) and Ibn-i-Abbas relates how the Prophet made over a property to his freed slave when a person happened to die heirless.

A Pertinent Question.

Were all these teachings of the Prophet and the Quran regarding the emancipation of slaves merely theoretical? It may be pointed out that the Prophet was the most practical of reformers. He did not give out any Commandments of an impractical nature, nor any which he himself and his companions did not act upon. He and his companions freed hundreds of thousands of slaves. Ayesha herself freed many. On one occasion, she freed as many

as forty slaves. When the Prophet died he did not leave behind him in his house a single pie or a single slave-girl. Considering that the system of slavery was prevalent throughout in many countries in those days, the work done in this direction by the Prophet and his Companions is simply marvellous. Even modern America cannot stand comparison to Muhammad's work, for there even now the negro is an object of hatred and persecution. That many of the freed slaves rose to high respectable positions, as Commanders, Scholars, Lawyers, Historians, Mystics, etc., are standing testimonies, to justify the Prophet's meritorious task of emancipation. With the words, "be careful about your prayers and your slaves" on his lips he passed away. The world has not produced a truer friend of the slaves since then.

Humanity's Greatest Benefactor, Muhammad.

What constitutes sacrifice, what is its nature and character? This question must be answered by way of a few introductory

remarks, before attempting the subject of Muhammad's sacrifices for the moral and spiritual uplift of mankind.

The Definition of Sacrifice.

Forcible deprivation of a man's possessions cannot be called a sacrifice. Genuine sacrifice is the giving up of highly valued things with willingness and cheerfulness for the good of others.

Many die and many go abroad, leaving their homes and hearths. This is no sacrifice. The Prophet's sacrifices were for the sake of others, willingly and patiently undertaken. There was not an atom of selfishness in it.

Kinds of Sacrifice.

Genuine sacrifice can be divided into two kinds, namely, temporary and permanent, and of course the latter is of the superior type, and to this type belonged the Prophet's sacrifices, who always emphasized upon the perpetuation of a good deed.

These two kinds of sacrifices can be subdivided into those of a compulsory nature forced upon by circumstances, and those, self-imposed sacrifices, inspired by an inward urge. The Prophet's sacrifices were comprised of both, compulsory and self-imposed. He and his companions were harassed and persecuted so that he might give up a mission that was entrusted to him by God. But he would not. He willingly underwent all persecutions for the higher end.

Enforced and Self-Imposed Sacrifices.

The Prophet had to take part in fights against those who wanted to exterminate Islam, for he desired to promote the cause of Islam. This was enforced sacrifice. But when he sacrificed all, his money and comfort, for the sake of God and religion, it was a case of self-imposed sacrifice.

Again, the Prophet's sacrifices were not intended to meet an ephemeral end. He sacrificed everything for the highest common good of humanity, selfish and personal considerations being entirely out

of question. They were spotlessly pure in motive, varied in nature, lofty in conception, and amazingly successful in execution. He is commanded by God to say:—

“We shall most certainly disclose the perfection of your faith in this way that you will be made to go through conditions in which you shall have to face fear and hunger and shall have to put up with loss of property and lives. To those, who will gladly and cheerfully endure all these hardships and sufferings and will say that the things bestowed upon them by God have been well-spent in His way, give good news that their sacrifices have not been vainly borne.”

The various kinds of sacrifices that the Prophet underwent may be conveniently grouped under certain headings such as the sacrifice of physical nature, the sacrifice of passions, ambitions,

and aspirations, sacrifice of money, sacrifice of his country or home, sacrifice of friends and relatives, sacrifice of honour, comfort, convenience and luxury, and sacrifice of life.

Sacrifice of Physical Nature.

The Prophet was hale and hearty throughout his life, leading expeditions even at the advanced age of sixty three. Such a person in the full bloom of his life, at twenty five married a lady of advanced age so that he might not be engrossed in wordly pleasures, for, he wanted to use all his energy for a higher purpose. He could not and did not waste his time in satisfying his carnal desires, though he possessed a full physical capacity to do it.

In his old age he married a young girl which meant only unnecessary burden and anxiety for him. He bore all these, because he wanted to teach other women through this young wife, his tenets of religion. On many occasions the Prophet had sacrificed his personal feelings and considerations.

Sacrifice of Personal Feelings.

Abbas, the Prophet's Uncle, a Muslim at heart and previously having helped his nephew in many ways, being compelled by the Quraish fought against the Prophet in the battle of Badr. He like others was made a captive and tied tightly with ropes. He groaned with pain and the Prophet was naturally much perturbed. This made the men relax the rope a bit to give some relief to the captive. Yet the Prophet said, "Either loosen the strings of all the captives or tighten the strings with which Abbas is bound." The uncle was given relief only along with others. On no account, could he compromise with fairness and justice. This is sacrifice of a high order, sacrifice of personal feelings, however trying and delicate they might be.

Prophet's Steadfastness of Purpose and Humaneness.

"Would you not desist from preaching against, at least, the idols and Gods of the Meceans and spare us much unnecessary trouble?" It was the request made to

the Prophet by his beloved uncle and guardian, Abu Talib, for the latter was warned by the Meccans against his nephew's activity of preaching against their idols and Gods. They said to Abu Talib:—"If you do not make him realise the error of his ways and stop him from his course we shall be constrained to oppose you as well." The nephew was really in the horns of a dilemma, in an awkward and delicate situation, his higher duty to a Higher Being almost coming into clash with his strong personal feeling towards his uncle. He must preach God's message at personal cost. That was decided. So, he said to his uncle, with tears in his eyes, "Uncle dear, I can bear all sorts of privations, hardships, troubles, persecutions, for your sake. I could even lay down my life at your bidding. But one thing I cannot give up even at your beseeching. I must not cease preaching the Unity of God and the helplessness and powerlessness of the gods and goddesses of the Qureish, and their iniquity and stupidity of setting them up equal to Allah. You may leave me to my fate and at the mercy

of my enemies and persecutors." The uncle, knowing his nephew's attitude very well and realising that his refusal to his request really came at the call of a higher urge and duty, said encouragingly and touchingly to him thus:—"My nephew! go and carry on your noble task, whatever you say is true. I and my relatives are with you and will ever remain with you ready to bear any persecution for your sake." Thus, the Prophet sacrificed his own feelings and those of his relatives even, for discharging a higher duty, which meant no small trial of mental struggle. The beautiful incident of how he could not find a way to give a slave-girl to his own daughter, Fatima, for her assistance, whose hands had become swollen with blisters, though a lot of captives had fallen into his hands after a victorious battle, and how instead he replied in consoling words to her, is really characteristic of the utmost limit of his personal sacrifice. He said to her, "Rest content with your present lot, because this condition is more calculated to win God's pleasure." Even his wives' feelings were

not to stand in the way of his higher mission, and to such an extent he suppressed and sacrificed his personal feelings and needs.

The Persecution And Ascension.

The persecution of the Prophet and his followers by the Quraish now commenced. Moslems were made to lie on the awfully burning sand of Arabia, heavy stones being placed on their chests. Branding with red hot irons, immersion in water till almost drowned, dragging the victims by their feet through the streets, the passers-by being asked to spit on them were, to name a few of the atrocities, inflicted upon the Moslems. Even Muhammad was not spared. One day while he was praying, a man threw a sheet round his neck and so forcibly dragged him that he fell on his knees. Once even a camel's intestines were thrown over him at the time of worship. Men cast rubbish upon him from their windows as he passed by, and thorns were strewn in his way. Even women became the victims of such a cruel persecution, and Abu Jahal was the arch-persecutor.

As the persecution was becoming almost unbearable, the Prophet advised some of his followers to take refuge in the neighbouring Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia, where they were treated with justice and hospitality. There were four women and eleven men in this first Hijrat or exile.

The fire of persecution purified the Prophet's creed, and his Cause was justified. Later, these exiles were followed by others, bringing the total number to eighty-three men and eighteen women.

The Quraish smelt danger in the voluntary exile of the Moslems, as the new faith so far limited to the bounds of Arabia threatened now to spread over a wider area. Moreover, through the new settlers, Abyssinia would get acquainted with the nature of the rule at Mecca, its excesses and weaknesses, which might mean a fresh attack on Mecca by that powerful state. So a Meccan delegation tried to influence the Negus to see that the exiles were expelled from that country, accusing them of having forsaken their ancestral religion to adopt a new faith.

“On this the Negus sent for the followers of the Prophet, who having come, the Emperor convened a meeting of his bishops, of whom he inquired, ‘What is this religion which is neither like ours, nor like any other?’”

Then Jafar, son of Abu Talib, as the spokesman of the Moslems, informed the Emperor how they were leading an utterly barbarous life devoid of morals, worshipping idols, and how the Prophet invited them towards Allah, the only true God, teaching them healthy moral laws regarding truthfulness, fear of God, charity, and protection for the weak and the orphan.

In detail, did Jafar mention to the Emperor how the diverse cruelties were perpetrated upon them at Mecca, when he was asked by the latter to recite some passages from the Quran. The Negus and his bishops, evidently overcome by this recital of the Quranic verses, wept bitterly, after which addressing the Moslems, the Emperor said:—“Verily, this, and what Moses brought, emanate from one Light. Go! for by God I will not

suffer them to be had by you, nor even contemplate this."

Though failed thus in his attempt, the head of the Meccan delegation sought to exert the influence of the Church dignitaries on the Emperor by mis-representing to them the attitude of the followers of Islam towards Christianity, pointing out that they had no faith in the Trinity and the Divinity of Jesus.

This machination seemed to succeed, and the Moslems' case was almost shaking in the balance, when the next day the Moslems had to explain before the Emperor's council, filled with bishops and state officers, their attitude towards Christ. "Say what your belief is about Christ," thundered the Negus to Jafar and the latter replied that Jesus was to them (to Moslems) a Voice of God, a slave of Allah and His Prophet.

On hearing this, the Emperor picked up a piece of straw from the ground and holding it in his fingers said, "By God, the Almighty, Jesus was no more than what you state, you have not exaggerated about him even as much as this thin piece of straw."

He further added, "Go to your dwellings and live and worship in your own way," none shall interfere with you." It is needless to say that the Meccans and the bishops were thoroughly taken aback by this unexpectedly favourable turn to Jafar and his men.

The Moslem refugees were now anxious to show their gratitude to the Emperor, their benefactor. So once as he was commanding in person an army and fighting against those who invaded his territory, the Moslems wanted to ascertain whether their help was needed in the fight. Subair, one of those Moslems, then swam the Nile by means of inflated goatskins, went to the scene of war, and returned to inform his friends that their help was not needed as the Emperor was victorious.

Now that the Meccans had failed in their attempt to get back the Moslem refugees from Abyssinia, their hearts rankled with an intensely revengeful animosity. An organised system of persecution was set afoot by them, despite the fact that such persons as Omar and Hamza had embraced the new faith and

that the number of Muhammad's followers was increasing day by day.

Next then, the implacable enemies took the very extreme step of ostracising the entire house of Bani Hashim, the House that gave birth to Islam, till they yeilded to hand over Muhammad to them to be slain. All marriage and business relations with them were prohibited, and they were not to be provided by any one with water or any articles of food.

While the presecution of the Moslems in general increased in intensity, the House of the Prophet, under the severe ban of excommunication and social boycott, suffered the worst for three years for all his doings. They bore the whole weight with characteristic patience until it reached the breaking point, and ugly starvation stared into their face.

It was during this period that Muhammad had his ascension to the Celestial Throne of Allah, and it was during the same time that he instituted five times prayers a day. At last the ban on his house was lifted. Khadija and Abu Talib died. For a period

of ten years the Prophet had to carry on his mission under trying and turbulent circumstances, that demanded his full fortitude and courage.

Muhammad's zeal and resolve grew stronger, as the opposition grew fiercer. The enemies wanted to extirpate the Islamic cause that had wrought disgrace to them and their idols. All sorts of miracles were demanded from the Prophet, the Messenger of God. The same was the case with Jesus. Professor Momeris says:—"His immediate disciples were always misunderstanding him and his work; they wanted him to call down fire from heaven; then wanted him to declare himself king of the Jews; they wanted to possess his right hand while see on his left hand his kingdom; they wanted him to show them the Father, and to make God visible to their eyes. This was how they treated him until the end. When that came, they all forsook Him, and fled."

It was no wonder, heathen Arabia, full of occult practices, demanded miracles from the Prophet, for, it was a time when even an

ordinary saint was expected to show something of miracles. But the Prophet's disciples, it must be said to their credit, took him at his real merit, considering him as a model man. He was a plain man, speaking in a plain tongue the Gospel as revealed to him by God. "I am only a preacher of God the deliverer of Allah's message to mankind. God has not sent me to work wonders. He has sent me to preach to you. My Lord be praised! Am I more than a man when sent to you as an Apostle?..... Angels do not commonly come down on earth, or God would have despatched an angel to preach His truth to you. I cannot even help or trust my self, unless God pleaseth." There is absolutely no mystery about him and his mission, and there is no statement anywhere from him, "which could be construed into a request for human worship."

Al-Isra, the Prophet's nocturnal journey to Jerusalem, and Al-Meraj, his ascension to Heavens is variously described, some thinking that the journey was physically accomplished, while others, including Ayesha, being of opinion that his soul alone undertook the journey.

According to Bin Ibrahim, it was on the night of the twenty-seventh of the month of Rabi-ul Awwal that the Angel descended to the place where Muhammad was sleeping, to carry him to Allah through the seven zones of Heaven. That night the moon and stars shone with double radiance.

“I was in a deep sleep when the angel Jibrail (Gabrael) appeared to me.” Quoth the Prophet. The angel took the Prophet to a sacred well, and washed his heart with its holy water. Then the angel brought the wonderful human faced bird, Al Burraaq, on which the Prophet mounted for his celestial journey. The creature, flapping its wings, rose up and up above the clouds.

From the sacred temple of Mecca, he was taken with great rapidity to the Masjidul Aqsa in Jerusalem. On alighting from the Burraaq, the angel who had accompanied him in his journey, offered him two cups, the one containing milk and the other wine. He refused the wine cup, drinking milk only. Then the angel spoke: “If thou hadst

preferred wine, it would have meant thou preferredst Error to Truth”.

After visiting the mosque, the Prophet climbed up to where the great rock of Sukhra lies. Remounting the Burraaq and led by the angel, he went up again. On his way he met the fore-gone Prophets, Adam, Moses, Abraham, Jesus, Idris, and he saw Paradise with its ground of musk and with its edifices of pearls.

Proceeding further to a place, he could hear the Pen scribbling the account of world's destinies and work of nature. There was beyond the Tree of Eternity resplendent with divine effulgence, and he himself was enveloped with Light of Heaven. The angel also appeared before him in all brilliancy. He was near the Celestial Throne, where he heard the divine command to perform fifty prayers every day.

On his way back, he met Moses who said, “Thy followers are too weak to bear the burden of fifty prayers.” Thrice, therefore, he went to the Celestial Throne to get the number of prayers reduced to five.

And it is said that the virtue of fifty was vouchsafed for five.

At last Muhammad returned to Jerusalem. The Prophets, Moses, Abraham, and Jesus were awaiting his arrival. It was dawn. All were ready for the morning prayer. Muhammad led the congregation, and subsequently he was again in the great Temple of Mecca.

Thus runs the legendary tale of the Prophet's Ascension with this underlying truth that the Prophet must have experienced this heavenly bliss at least in a spiritual transportation to another world, when he was in one of his most spiritual trances and his mind extremely concentrated.

The Prophet, by constant meditation and prayer in the atmosphere of pure and high thoughts, with his soul resplendant with Divine light, was ever transported to the heights of spiritual thoughts and realms beyond the ken of ordinary humanity.

In this legend is contained the stepping-stone of Islamic religion regarding the injunction of five times prayers a day

pointing out why the Moslems should turn their faces towards Mecca while praying and hold Jerusalem as most sacred place next to it. Finally, the Period of Ascension marks the turning-point in Prophet's preaching, warning the people of Mecca that the wrath of Allah would descend upon them, and foretelling them his famous Hijrah from Mecca to Medina.

Hijrah, or the Flight.

The torch of truth was lit. The Moslems were growing in strength, while the Quraish were growing more openly violent towards them. The believers of the true faith were not allowed to recite the Koran loudly, nor to pray in the Temple of Mecca. At Taif the Prophet had had a very bitter experience. He was spat upon and jeered at, and stones were thrown at him. Somehow he returned from there with his skin safe. Yet with all this he was steadfast, and he never stopped preaching his mission.

In fact, he only grew more zealous in his cause. The opportunity soon came to him, when the pilgrim season was drawing near, which would draw to Mecca the men

of the desert from far and wide. The Quraish were naturally anxious about this, and they were equally bent upon devising methods to wean away people from hearing him. They decided to warn the men by proclaiming him as a wizard and his religion as a farce, and further by denouncing the Quran as a man-made poem, intended for self-aggrandisement. The Prophet decided to stand on the merits of his cause.

Those pilgrims came to Mecca from far-off corners of Arabia, from the heart of the burning desert. They came, and they were many in number to rejoice, and to pray to those countless idols for gifts of children, for showers of rain, or for victory over enemies. They bought and sold at the marts, and drank at the tavern till their heads reeled. But lo! a call to all. Muhammad was speaking.

A man was reeling heavily drunk, and was mumbling incoherent prayers before the stone God. A woman was praying to the God, Hobal, to get back her dead child. The Quraish were walking about collecting offerings from the poor pilgrims. And here

amidst a thronged courtyard of the Temple, Muhammad rose to speak. He pointed out to the Pagans the way of One God, the Light of Truth for people groping in the dark, warning them of the evil day if they did not mend their ways. He called out again and again, "Come to Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful."

The people looked at him with amazement, amazed at the boldness with which he propounded a new faith against their ancestral idols. The Quraish would have torn him to pieces, but some how they did not. Righteousness protected him. Afterwards he spoke to some men of Medina about his mission, and the seed was cast.

He spoke to those men of Medina at the hill of Aqabah, whose number was six.

They were convinced that the Koran recited by him with so much warmth and glow was really a Holy Book and that He was a true Prophet. They embraced his faith, promising him to carry his message of peace to their people.

Such was the zest of these people from Medina for Islam that their original number doubled within a year. They met the Prophet again at Aqabah and they took the oath of fidelity to him. Then in accordance with their request, Muhammad sent with them Musab Ibn Umar for carrying on vigorously the preaching of Allah's religion.

Unlike Mecca, Medina proved of more congenial soil, and had a purer atmosphere for the spread of Islam. People were more amenable to reason. The new religion rapidly gained ground, and the number of the Moslems increased to seventy-five.

With their growing zeal, the Medina converts were anxious to have the Prophet with them so that he, the Champion of their religion, might be properly guarded from enemies. They had heard of and seen the atrocities inflicted on his followers in Mecca.

This request of having Muhammad with them was duly placed before the Prophet. Says one among them thus:- "We made up our minds to keep our movements secret

from our idolatrous fellow-citizens, amongst whom we slept till one-third of the night passed. We then went out, one after another, stealthily, making our way, slowly and silently, towards a pass on the slopes of the Aquabah, where we all met together to await the Prophet. He soon arrived, accompanied by his uncle Abbas Ibn Abdul Muttalib."

Abbas accompanied Muhammad, because he had, like his brother, Abu Talib, a great affection for him, though he was still following his ancestral religion. Besides he wanted to know what amount of confidence Muhammad could have in those zealots of Medina. He was the first to speak in the meeting, and he said, "The people of the Khazraj and the Aus! My brother's son, as you know, holds high rank amongst us, and although we do not share his convictions, we have hitherto protected him against his fellow-citizens. In our company he finds honour and safety. Nevertheless, at this hour he turns towards you, and desires to settle in your midst."

"Reflect! If you decide to remain

faithful to your promises and shield him from all dangers whatsoever, it will be well. But should ye fear to be forced one day to throw him over, and give him into the hands of his enemies, it would be better now at once to confess that your purpose is not steadfast by withdrawing your proposals and leaving him with his own party."

He was assured thus: "Thou hast heard what we proposed. Thou canst rely on us absolutely!" And to Muhammad they said: "Speak, O Prophet! what dost thou want of us, for thy Lord and for thyself!"

Having recited a few passages from the Quran, and after recapitulating the fundamentals of Islam, the Prophet added:—"Swear that ye will fight to defend me and my disciples, as ye would fight to defend your wives and children."

All of them took the required oath to defend the Prophet's cause at any cost; and for all their trouble, they wanted only one assurance from him that he would always remain with them.

The Prophet replied with a smile "Rest easy on that score. Your blood hath become my blood, and your honour, my honour. He who wrongeth you, wrongeth me. I will fight the enemies ye fight, and support whom ye support, ye are mine and I am yours! Chose then twelve Najibs amongst you as leaders." The twelve men were accordingly chosen to whom he said, "Ye shall be my delegates among your people, as were the apostles of Jesus, son of Mary, among their people."

But just as the solemn oath was about to be taken, one among the party, Bin Zarara, rising and speaking, caused a rift in the lute. He demanded, "But may we ask the Prophet what shall we receive in exchange for all our troubles?" "Paradise" was the quick reply from the Prophet.

The oath of fidelity was then taken by all, Abul Hasheem, the leader, being the first to swear allegiance. They promised to protect the Prophet, to acknowledge the supreme prerogative of God, and to desist for ever from theft, adultery, infanticide and falsehood. This negotiation at Aquabah

marks an important land-mark in Islamic history and religion.

The Quraish became aware of all this, of the growing power of Islam in Medina, working now with wondrous vigour under proper organisation. It was a menace to the Meccan chiefs, and they wanted to combat it. They were also aware of the preparations the new zealots were making to receive the Prophet amidst them.

At a stormy meeting in the temple of the Kaba, the Pagans finally decided to warn the people of Medina not to assist their arch-enemy and his faith. Of course, it was a futile attempt.

While the threatening storm was gathering and growing at Mecca, the atmosphere was becoming clearer and clearer in Medina. It was time for the Prophet to advise his disciples to leave Mecca for Medina. Slowly they, one after another, left the City, without creating any suspicion. But the Prophet was yet there, with Abu Bakr and Ali. Abu Bakr persuaded him to leave the city, but he would not. Meditating and praying, he was

awaiting the Divine Command to do so.

At last, the Voice came. The action was decided. The Prophet was ready for the departure. Abu Bakr was besides himself with joy, for he was to accompany his Master to a place where the tender religion was to have its promising future. Muhammad was also glad, for, he was going to a place where he would feel quite at home for his work, and where he and his faith was vouchsafed a right royal welcome. He could work there with enthusiasm and vigour, sharing the blessings of the Koran with all.

At the time when the Prophet was preparing to leave the City, the Quraish had again met together in secret to devise measures to put a stop once for all to the activities of Muhammad. They decided to kill him, and the arch-enemy, Abu Jahal was ready with a scheme to carry out the dark deed without implicating any particular person in it. The assassins were to be selected from different clans, who were to surround and stand awaiting outside the Prophet's house, for his egress. One among them was so impatient that he, with a

scimitar in hand, hurried to the very door. "Tarry a moment you fool!" spoke Jahal, holding him back, "Tarry a while, he will come out, Muhammad will not see the dawn of another day."

Surely, he did not see the dawn of another day there, for he, with his companion, Abu Bakr, had already left the place, leaving behind, Ali for the settlement of some of his affairs. Full of hope and joy, those two men of God, passed beyond the hills of Mecca, wending their way towards Medina through valleys and desert.

The two refugees passed the night in a cave three miles off Mecca. The day dawned. The assassin's wrath knew no bounds when they sadly missed their victim in his house. Ali was there instead. The leader of the Quraish thundered to him thus:— "And what art thou here for? thy master has fled leaving a weakling like thee, Bah!" He was dragged before the shrine of the idols. "Slit his tongue" shouted one. He was let off safe at last, because he was left behind by the Prophet to return pro-

perties entrusted to him, and after all he was not the person whom they wanted to kill.

The maddened and disappointed Qu-raish made rigorous searches for Muhammad, parties riding in haste on camel's backs up and down the hills until they came to the very vicinity of the refugees, where their talks could be heard by the Prophet and his companion, Abu Bakr.

Surely, God's ways are mysterious and inscrutable. What a narrow escape they had, those two sacred souls, from the hands of their assassins! Abu Bakr was extremely anxious for the Prophet's safety, but the latter whispered, "Allah is with us." One person with sword in hand, had almost reached their dwelling place. Somehow he was baffled, and he blinked, and turned back. Allah threw dust into the eyes of them all. What they wanted was almost at their feet. But they could not see, and they must not. They were thus hiding in the cave for full four days. The Prophet's sister-in-law regularly sent them food every day, and Abu Bakr's slave was ready there every

day with his herd, to provide them with milk. In the meanwhile, the Quraish had proclaimed a reward of hundred camels for any one who could capture Muhammad alive or even bring him dead to Mecca.

The Prophet and his companion continued their journey towards Medina. A vast ocean of sand was lying before them. Exposed to the hot blaze of the sun, parched with thirst and threatened with hunger, yet full of zeal, there sat in the saddle of his camel, the Prophet, the Standard bearer of a new faith, invoking the name of Allah, ever in Holy Communion with him. A cloud of dust was seen coming towards the Prophet. At nearer view it disclosed a horse rider, a wild warrior. He had made sure of those who were proceeding towards Medina. Siraqa, that was his name, wanted to slay Muhammad and obtain the prize of a hundred camels. But the horse stumbled and fell, which was not a good omen for his enterprise. Yet the prize was too alluring to be forsaken. He mounted again and spurred on. Again, another bad portent. The horse's legs sunk into the soft sand. He gave up the game, approached the

Prophet, and begged his forgiveness which was readily granted.

The People of Medina had already known about the coming of the Prophet. All were anxiously awaiting his arrival. Sitting on the parapets of the city walls, watching across the vast desert, glowing with the fire of the blazing sun, they strained their eyes and nerves day after day, longing every moment to have a glimpse of the great soul and ever ready to welcome his arrival into their city.

At last one day a Jewish scholar looking out of his window into the vast desert, saw in the far distance two men clad in white robes. He was sure who they were. He ran through the town, crying, "O ye, the men of Islam, the one that you seek is coming, in yonder direction, he and his companion are now approaching the city." There was an uproar of joy. Men buckled up their armour, dressed in their best, and went to welcome the Prophet to the city.

Quba, on a higher plain, was about three miles from Medina. There. many

Ansars had their houses. It is reported that Muhammad lived in this place for fourteen days in the house of Amr Bin Aof. It was on the eighth day of the Rabiul Awwal that Muhammad entered into the suburbs of Quba. The erection of a house of worship was the first thing to engage his attention. He himself laid its foundation, and worked among the labourers, digging, levelling, or carrying stones and mixing mortar.

The great Prophet and Teacher, rolling up his sleeves and working among others as a labourer, is a striking example of virtue. He wanted to stamp in the minds of all that, in the eyes of Allah, all Moslems without any distinction of social status are brethren, and that no question of superiority was worthy of consideration in his view. About this first Mosque, the Quran says:—

“.....Certainly a mosque founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving than you should stand in it; and that there are men who love self purification, and Allah loves those who purify themselves.



THE MOSQUE OF THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD AT MADINA.
The Green Tomb stands in which the Last Apostle of Allah is lying in rest.

IN MEDINA.

The Prophet made his formal entry into the city of Medina, after his week's stay at Quba. It was a day of unparalleled rejoicing for all. The streets were lined up with men. The youth led the procession with fluttering banners and glittering blades, and warriors in shining armours rode forward, when from the throats of thousands went up the cry, "Allaho-Akbar," (God is great) repeated oft with increasing enthusiasm. The Ansars welcomed the Prophet again and again. Many held the gear of his camel, women shouted from the top of the houses, and young girls chanted his praise. Responding to these felicitations, he passed from street to street. But where was he going and where would he stay?

All the Ansars wanted to have the honour of being the host of this great personality. "Let my camel go where he wishes. I shall stay where the camel may sit" was the reply to those who desired to lodge him. The animal at last stopped in an open space which was a barn of one Abu Ayyub Ansari. There the Prophet decided to stay.

The Leader of the Faithful lived at Abu Ayyub's residence for seven month. In the meanwhile, zaid was sent to Mecca to bring the various female members of his family to Medina. The building of a mosque engaged the immediate attention of the Prophet. It was a modest, thatched building of mud walls, with a room in one corner for such Moslems who had no home, and around the mosque were quarters for the Prophet's family. Islam had its real birth here under such simple and humble atmosphere, which offered no luxury, wealth, and no glitter.

Settling Down In Medina.

When things settled down to a tranquil state, an organised form of worship was instituted. The use of horns and bells were suggested for a call to the faithful, for the five times prayers in the mosque. But Muhammad did not approve of it. To send a call in a loud voice was then the form fixed instead, and the mode of prayer was also given a prescribed form.

Next came the question of a social organization and relation of the Moslems

THE CITY OF THE PROPHET OR 'MADINATUR RASOOL



between those at Medina and the immigrants from Mecca, when the financial position of the latter was absolutely naught. The Ansar proposed to the Prophet that they would willingly share, half and half, with the immigrants of all their property, land or business. Thus, the forty-five immigrants were "connected into a brotherly accord" with forty-five men of Medina. The system became so common that when a man from Medina died, his whole property went to the share of his Meccan immigrant. The Quran commanded :—

"Surely those who believed and fled (from their homes) and struggled hard in Allah's way with their property and soul, and those who gave shelter and help—these are guardians (brothers) of each other..."

Despite this noble support to the immigrants offered by the Ansars, the Meccans did not stand for taking an undue advantage of anything, if they could somehow manage themselves. Abdur Rahman Bin Auf, declining with thanks an offer from a brother Ansar, preferred to open a small shop in the market,

and he gradually rose to a flourishing condition.

Within a few months, this excellent social arrangement thoroughly justified itself by its splendid result. A few refugees of no means and power suddenly grew into a powerful civic body, contributing its share in trade and agriculture. The Prophet wanted to extend this experiment further, apart from the Moslems, in the direction of forming an alliance with neighbours.

The Jews of Medina, though Arabs by descent, formed a distinct unit by adopting Judaism. Out of their three clans, Banu Quainuqa, Banu Quraiza, and Banu Nazir, the second and third sided with the Arab clans of Aus and Khazraj respectively, in the latter's frequent warfare with each other.

From the above Arab clans, a very large number had embraced Islam, making the Prophet's interference in their affairs necessary. He found it essential to form a treaty with the two Jewish Clans, and the latter readily consented to his proposals.

The important terms of this treaty were as follows:— The Moslems and the Jews were to live in peace. The contracting parties could keep to their own religion without fear of molestation. In the event of an attack, Medina was to be defended by both parties, and the City was to be considered holy and sacred by both, and so no bloodshed was to be allowed within its bounds. Each was to help the other in the event of an attack by a third party. And in all matters of dispute, the Prophet was to be their Arbitrator and final court of appeal.

Internal Trouble In Medina.

Thus, through the efforts of the Prophet, the Moslem's position in Medina was gradually assuming a peaceful and organised form. Yet, the discerning eye could clearly see the under-current of intrigue, distrust and menace.

There was a difference between Mecca and Medina which meant much. Mecca had a unified national system throughout, devoid of diverse elements. It had the same laws and

traditions, the same national outlook and aspirations. But Medina was composed of different elements. There were the Jews, the non-Moslem Arabs, and the Moslems of Mecca and Medina. Despite the unifying work that the Prophet had already effected between these elements, it might be said that some had embraced the new faith in their own interests or to help the enemies of Islam.

Abdullah, the rival Arab chief, found how his importance and position was dwarfed after the advent of Islam in Medina. He soon got a good opportunity to invite the Jews and others against the Prophet on the plea that the Moslems were commanded to turn their faces towards Mecca, instead of Jerusalem, which was against the creed of the Jews. The Jews, therefore, turned inimical towards the Moslems.

A serious question for discussion now arises. How was it that the Moslems were commanded to face Mecca, when it is said it was a city of idols and pagans, and Islam is against all forms of idolatry and pagan worship, proclaiming the unity of God? How

was it that even the Prophet prayed in the courtyard of the temple of Mecca? And how was it that many of the Prophet's followers went to Mecca for pilgrimage? Are these not against the rules and tenets of Islam ?

A proper answer to these questions requires a proper understanding of the real object of Islamic worship in Mecca. Was it the courtyard of the Temple, its bricks and stones, that they were worshipping? Or, was it again the Kaaba, the Black Stone, or the idols? No, none of these earthly structures, least of all the idols. They were paying homage to the House of God there, built by Abraham and Ishmael (Samuel) in memory of the highest sacrifice to God, the sacrifice of Abraham's own son. The Moslems bow towards the Meccan shrine, because it is the House of God thus rendered sacred and holy. Muhammad prayed in the courtyard of the shrine, and so his followers went on a pilgrimage to that place only on this account.

With Mecca as a centre, all the Moslems were united into one people, all facing

towards Mecca, emphasizing the idea of the Unity of God and His purpose. Other reasons can also be found for the Command:—
 “.....then turn your face towards the sacred mosque (Qibla at Mecca).” It was the fulfilment of God’s promise of accepting the prayers of Abraham. He prayed: “Our Lord! make us both submissive to Thee, and raise from our off-spring a nation submitting to Thee.....And raise up in them an Apostle who shall recite to them I’hy Divine Communications.....”

This prayer was accepted. The Apostle sent was Muhammad, who brought the Koran and who purged the House of God, the Qibla, of its loathsome idols. The re-establishment of the Qibla distinguished the real Moslems from the Pretenders, about whom the Qurán says thus:—“And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book (both the Christians and the Jews are called the people of the Book by the Moslems, because the original Bible and the Quran are considered as the Holy Work of Allah) every sign, they would not follow your Qibla, nor can you be the followers of their

Qibla.....” Their Qibla was obviously Jerusalem.

Now it is made pretty clear why the Moslems faced Mecca, after sixteen months of their constant facing towards Jerusalem in prayer. This discussion must explode also the fanatical theory that the Moslem's adoration of Mecca was a remnant of pre-Islamic polytheism.

Establishment Of Other Islamic Injunctions.

Having decided that the faithful ones shall pray facing towards Mecca, other details of prayer were also settled which were that they shall range themselves in a row behind an Imam, the leader of prayers, shall stand, then bend, and lastly touch the ground in unison, following the leader. And then, having repeated the same process once more, finally they shall sit folding their legs under them till the end of the prayer.

The next Commandment was about the observance of fast during Ramadan, the month of fasting. “As to the month of Ramadan, in which the Quran was sent for

men's guidance..... as soon as any one observeth the moon, let him set about to fast....." During this period, between sunrise and sunset, food, drink, smoking, drugs and intoxicating liquors of every kind, and anything that "feed the body" were entirely prohibited. "They will ask thee concerning liquors..... say: In them lies a great sin....."

The third Commandment is about Charity and Gambling. Not only wine, but gambling too, was banned. "O, Believers! wine and game of chance, and statues and divining arrows, are only part and parcel of Satan's work! Avoid them, that ye may prosper." Charity was to be given according to a man's property and earning, and it was intended only for the poor.

These Islamic injunctions and morals were gradually building up a well-organised society under the able guidance and leadership of the Prophet.

The Storming Clouds.

In the meanwhile, troubles were growing thick for the Prophet and his followers.

The local dignitaries, helped by the Jews and led by Abdullah Bin Ubay, were intriguing with the Quraish of Mecca and the Beduins of the desert, because the Prophet's over-lordship and leadership had eclipsed the authority and fame of the local leaders, and his movement was undermining day by day the power of the idol-worshippers. Abdullah, the chief of Medina, was losing his trade, the Jews could only lend money on justifiable interest, and the non-Moslem Arabs could not use their magisterial power as they liked. Amidst all these inevitable troubles, lived Muhammad hoping and praying, with unflinching faith in his cause and in his followers.

The storming clouds were already visible over the heads of the Moslems in Medina. Brandishing their swords, the wild sons of the desert were in the neighbourhood, which was a sufficient proof that they were already in league with the non-Moslems in the town. Besides the Meccans were planning an organised attack.

In such a plight, just imagine in what an uncertain state the Prophet was placed?

It was nothing short of disaster for a handful of unequipped refugees to fight against a well-equipped, well-planned, and tenfold resourceful army of the Quraish. The impending war meant an unnecessary burden upon the Ansar, the peace-loving hosts of the Moslems. The Jews were ready to fall upon the Moslems at any moment.

Islam, means Peace and Resignation. The new faith being totally against the ferocity of war the Prophet was puzzled. At such a moment he received the following Revelation:—

“.....And fight for the Cause of Allah against those who fight against you. But commit not the injustice of attacking them first.....”

So, preparations were made to defend Medina.

The Battle Of Badr.

Relations between the Moslems and the Quraish were already getting strained, and actual skirmishes began to take place between them. The heads of the non-Moslem

Arabs were being pressed by the Meccans for the expulsion of the Prophet from the city, threatening to attack them in case they failed to do so. A Moslem pilgrim at Mecca was actually threatened with death if his people did not get rid of the Prophet. One, Kurzar Bin Jafar had raided Pasture fields at Medina decamping with the Prophet's camels. These things were certainly to precipitate war; but the Prophet desired to avert it by taking only the necessary precautions.

Rumours of war were already thick in the air, increasing the tension in the relations of both the parties. A false report, that Abu Sufyan was maltreated near Medina and that his caravan was looted, was of course given much credence by the non-Moslems. This was enough to incite the Quraish. Meanwhile, the Prophet ordered a party to go into the desert and make a report of their reconnoissance.

When this party reached Nakhla, it forgot all about the Prophet's instructions (instructions only to reconnoitre.) The Moslem troopers, fell with swords in hand

on three Meccan Merchants, out of whom one was slain, and the rest were brought in chains before the Prophet who became very angry on their over-zeal and over-stepping his orders. This incident caused the Quraish to declare war on Muhammad and his followers. They vowed that Medina would be razed to the ground and its people butchered in cold blood. It was to be a war to the finish.

There, in the shrine of idols, before the war god, thronged a thousand warriors, and a hundred horsemen lined outside, singing hymns, and awaiting the blessings of the god for victory against the Prophet of Allah. Of course, the idol could not do anything for them, but that did not matter much. The eleven hundred strong marched out in battle array, with spears and swords and glittering armours, with groups of dancing girls, and with poets and bands singing war songs and reciting heroic tales of old. They were out to meet a foe, small in number and weak in defence.

Muhammad quite well knew what was going on around. He had the situation well in hand, for he was not only a leader of men

in peace, but also a leader in battle. With his three hundred and odd followers, he marched towards Badr, some eighty miles from Medina. The Ansar assured him that they would fight for him to the last drop of their blood. They reached the neighbourhood of Badr. The Quraish were already there.

At the dawn, the two armies faced each other, a strong well-equipped army, with sabres, swords, scimitars, and lances, to fight against a handful persons, armed and armoured only with unflinching faith. There were to be no yells and war cries on the part of the Moslems. It was a serious battle to defend their faith. Glory in Victory means dispelling the gloom, and death was in the Cause of Islam a worthy sacrifice. But on that fateful day Muhammad was earnestly praying for a quick termination of the strife, so that as many lives as possible could be saved from slaughter.

The Quraish were now within fighting distance. Phalanx after Phalanx of men went forward. The renowned Meccan swordsman, Utba, with his son and brother stepped forward. Three Moslems went to

meet them. The proud leader exclaimed to the Prophet: "O Muhammad, what match are these three men to battle with us? Send those amongst thy ranks that belong to the warrior tribes of Mecca, and are worthy to be called our adversaries." So, the three best fighters, Hamza, Ali and Obayda, faced the pagans. Hamza slew the leader, and Ali despatched off the other two. The opposing armies watched the duel, with yells on one side and prayers on the other. Another round was fought and the Moslems were again victorious. Then the attack became general.

Maddened by defeat, the whole of the Quraish army fell like vultures furiously on those few faithful Moslems. The air was rent with the din of battle cries and moans of women; sabres and scimitars clanked and clashed, rose and fell. Lances, spears, and arrows did their work. The Meccan army repeatedly charged their enemy, bent upon dislodging them from their position. But they were repulsed over and over again, with the result that many retreated and fled, leaving the dead on the

field. The victory was for those who feared Allah, who fought only to defend themselves, following the Koran:— “and fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you;” but commit not the injustice of attacking them first.....”

Fourteen were slain among the Moslems, and seventeen among the enemy, and as many were taken prisoners. The Prophet had even the non-Moslems buried.

The Prophet gave express orders regarding the proper treatment of prisoners who were guests in his eyes. He saw that they were properly clothed and fed, making arrangements for their ransom.

Many of the Quraish nobles who had offered a sturdy opposition died in the battle, Abu Jahal being one of them.

Battle of Ohud.

The decisive victory in the battle of Badr consolidated the position of the Moslems further. But another battle was inevitable. Extremely revengeful became the Meccans. The news of their defeat was sure to

undermine their trade and their prestige as the Keepers of the Shrine. So, the necessary arrangements were made for an immediate attack on Medina.

This time the Quraish wanted to ensure Victory, and not to take chances. So, they added to their resources by contracting an alliance with the desert tribes of Tiharna and Kinena, placing Abu Sufyan, the veteran soldier-merchant, at the command of the combined forces. The two armies met at Ohud, three miles from Medina. This time also, a small army of seven hundred Moslems faced a huge army of three thousand. An interesting feature was that women took an active part on both sides.

With his usual care, the Prophet had arranged his army in such a strategic position as to leave no room for a surprise attack, posting a strong body of archers at a cleft in the hills to guard the opening. The battle raged furiously, with deafening clash of arms. The Quraish rushed at their enemy with flashing swords, cursing, yelling, and slaying. Women urged their Quraish warriors. "Courage! ye sons of Abu Dar, courage" they

shouted, "Courage! ye defenders of women! strike home with the edges of your swords!" On the Moslem side, Hamza cut his way right through the Quraish legions, men fell before Ali like chaff, and Omar's sword was showing no mercy. The Quraish were again repulsed. Then Talha, the pagan standard-bearer, brandishing his sword before Ali, defied him crying. "You Moslems say that our dead will go to hell, and yours to heaven; let me send you to paradise." The latter accepting the challenge replied. "Be it so!" As they fought, Talha was struck down. "Mercy, son of my Uncle," cried the standard-bearer. "Mercy thou shalt have" replied Ali, "for thou dost not deserve the fire."

The Moslems had gained. The enemies were beginning to retire. "Glory be to Habal!" shouted Abu Sufyan, "Glory be to Allah!" shouted back Omar. The Quraish were weakening and the Moslems were definitely gaining ground. A roar of victory rose from their throats. It rose too soon. The archers, abandoning the key position, rushed to their compatriots. Khalid Ibn

Walid, the Cavalry Commander of the Quraish, seizing the opportunity, rushed to the opening, and attacked the Moslems in the rear. Another battle raged.

There was a regular shower of arrows among the mingled fighters, and men were falling right and left. In the confusion Moslems fought against each other, and even the Prophet was attacked by an enemy. The Moslem women attended to their wounded men, while the Meccan women fought with their warriors. Hamza fell and others too. There was already confusion and it was made worse by a false report that the Prophet was slain. The Moslems rushed forward with recklessness and many were slain. The carnage was appalling.

A grey flag was floating over the battlefield. Both parties were now thoroughly exhausted. The Quraish retreated, after mutilating the slain enemies. On returning to Medina, says Amir Ali, "the Prophet directed a small body of his disciples to pursue the retreating enemy, and to impress on them that though worsted

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in battle, they were yet unbroken in spirit, and too strong to be attacked again with impunity." Hearing this news of pursuit, Abu Sufyan, after murdering two Medinites on the way, hastened back to Mecca with the remnant of his forces. He sent a message to the Prophet informing him of his determination to exterminate him and his people. "God is enough for us, a good guardian is He," was the Prophet's characteristic reply.

Indecisive as this battle was, the serious loss of life to the Moslems was something unfavourable to them. The wild Beduins were incited by the Quraish to attack them and they were even promised active support. The Beduins were only too ready to carry on their depredations against the Moslems, for, they were the means of their livelihood.

There came the first attack from the men of the desert. It could not be termed as skirmish. Under Abu Sulma, a hundred and forty men of Islam, went out of Medina to meet the marauders who instantly fled from the place. The Moslems, under Abdullah Bin Anes, dispersed another party led by

Sufyan Bin Khalid, and the leader fell in the battle.

Treachery was tried next by the lawless clans. Abu Bara Kalabi, the chief of the Kalab Clan, presenting himself before the Prophet, informed him that his clan was ready to embrace Islam and that he should send to his place a few religious teachers to preach the tenets of Islam. Being hostile tribes, the Prophet had his fears to send his men among them. Anyway, reluctantly though, seventy picked men were sent. Including the messenger all except one Amr Omayeh (who managed to escape) were butchered in cold blood. They were surrounded by the men of hostile clans unawares. Similar treacheries were perpetrated by two other clans, eight out of the ten missionaries sent for them being killed in an ambush. The two remaining, Khabeeb and Zaid, were captured and taken to Mecca as slaves. The Meccans satisfied their spirit of revenge by executing them.

A crowd had gathered to witness the gruesome spectacle of Khabeeb's execution. There was the man with sabre in hand,

ready to carry out the dark performance. The Moslem's last request of offering a short prayer was granted. He stood reciting, "O Allah! Thanks to Thee, The Lord of Mercy and Compassion, To Thee we pray, and from Thee only do we seek help, lead us to Thine own way....." He bent low, touched the ground with his forehead, and was perfectly cheerful, calm, and resigned, even at the hour of death. What an extraordinary steadfastness and cent per cent genuine conviction! Here is the true spirit of Islam.

The Quraish thus stirred up the skirmishes, stirred up the whole desert people against the Prophet, mainly with a view to weaken the power of the Moslems; and then they wanted to extirpate them altogether by launching an attack of greater magnitude.

THE JEWISH REACTION.

The Defence of Medina.

The Jews, divided into three clans, lived in and around Medina. They were an influential section of the population. They had a full control over the financial position

of the Medinites, and virtually the whole trade of the city was in their hands. Being "People of the Book," they were more educated than the rest. Due to these reasons, we have seen already how the Prophet found it essential to enter into a pact with them.

But they soon disregarded the pact and were in regular league with the enemies of Islam, plotting with the non-Moslem section, and carrying on communication with the Quraish at Mecca. One of their renowned poets went to Mecca to incite people there against the Moslems, augmenting their spirit of revenge. He journeyed into the desert regions, moving among the tent-dwellers and preaching to them against Islam with all the witchery of his poetry.

It was no wonder that the Jews broke the pact and worked against the Prophet. For, they were not obeying with any rigidity even the law of Moses. And the high moral preachings of Islam acted as a check on many of their bad practices. For instance, it was quite a usual thing for an Arab debtor's wife to pass into the Jew money-lender's

harem, and there was the buying of the defaulter's children. The Jews, therefore, greatly resented the new check on their morals.

Nadhir's anti-Moslem propaganda in the desert region of Khaiber was another instance of the breach of pact. The Jewish clans of Qinqah, breaking the pact, declared war on the Moslems. They were besieged in their forts with the result that they surrendered after fifteen days, seven hundred of them leaving the city. The Nadhir were the next clan to rise against the Moslems.

It may be noted that the Prophet on his side was thoroughly faithful to the pact. He respected their fast days, and ordered the Moslems to keep fast on such days. He used to stand up whenever a Jewish bier passed by him. On one occasion, but for his interference, the Jews would have been roughly handled by the Arabs.

Islam, in brief, had enemies all around, Medina being its only place of refuge, and the Ansar, its only trusted friends, through every thick and thin. Against it, were ranged

the hypocrites, the pagans, the desert-dwellers and the Meccans.

It was not difficult for them now to raise a united, and formidable force against the Believers. Hence under Abu Sufyan, the veteran Quraish general, a coalition army of ten thousand strong was on its way to put up a determined fight against the Prophet.

As usual, there were only three thousand Moslem fighters against such a huge and combined army. It reflects no small credit, glory, and honour on the Moslems' part, that in every military engagement, without exception, they came out successful with a comparatively smaller number of men in the field, though they had no material resource, nor any superior military training.

The Quraish army having reached the city was surprised to note that there was none to oppose them. They asked, "Have they all fled, or are they all dead?" But the Moslems resorted to new military tactics to defend the city, trenches being dug around it, so that the enemy could only lay siege to it.

Needless to say that the Jews openly sided with the invaders.

The Prophet sent two messengers to persuade the Jews to render help in the defence of the city. It was not a question of the safety of the Moslems only, but it was a problem of common citizenship, as it being the bounden duty of the Jews to render help in a common cause, and to make good the solemn agreement at this critical hour. The messengers appealed to the Jewish chieftain in the name of truth and honesty, in the name of the Apostle of Allah, pointing out to the pact containing the agreement which read, "..... the Moslems and the Jews shall enjoy the same security and freedom; the guilty shall be pursued and punished; the Jews shall join the Moslems in defending Medina against all enemies, the interior of Medina shall be a sacred place for all who accept this pact....." But the Jews who were, perhaps, confident of victory, gave only a defiant reply, "Who is Muhammad, and who is the Apostle of God that we should obey him? There is no bond or compact between us and him."

The Moslems, the smaller and weaker party, were well advised in avoiding a regular battle with an army three times their number and well equipped with all. But to a desert town like Medina which depended upon imported food for its existence, the siege meant no small strain. Provisions decreased, and semi-starvation and then utter starvation began to make its ugly appearance. The worst of it was that there was no milk for children.

So, children died in their mothers' laps, and many died out of sheer hunger. Flat stones were tied to bellies to bear starvation. For days, the only sort of diet was, boiled dried skin with chopped-up hay soaked in it. The siege thus dragged on for twenty days. The men of the desert were growing restless. They rushed to the trenches again and again, but were repulsed every time.

On the side of the enemy, it was regular feasting for a few days, and afterwards everything went its way down. To replenish provisions and rations for an army of ten thousand, with a good number of followers, grooms, and animals, is no

easy thing. Devoid of fertile valleys or villages near by, with all the difficulties of transport, both men and animals were in the throes of a famine. Added to these, there was the rivalry of chieftains over the prospective booty. And how could they bear starvation like the Moslems, fighting as they were with the destructive spirit of revenge?

On one of those midnights, a Moslem watchman was startled by the voice of a woman. It was his wife. He asked her: "And what do you want here? Do you not know that women are not in this game of war? and this infant in your arms!" She was there to help her husband in keeping watch. As to the child, it was dead, since it could not get anything from a starved out mother. "Allah had given, and Allah hath taken back!" they said when the child was lowered under the sand. It was then, as the man prayed, his wife keeping watch in his place, that the sky grew dark and cloudy. A wind storm was ahead in progress.

The wind grew strong, and its stormy gusts blew rushing past. Clouds grew thicker.

driven up and down by the storm. There was lightning and a down-pour of rain; and yelling and crying could be heard from the enemy's camp. The bon-fire was gone, the tents were uprooted, and the animals broke loose and scampered off.

By early dawn, everything was quiet, calm, and serene. The furious gale had done its work splendidly well. It had helped Allah's men. The enemies had fled, and not a trace of their tents was found. They were dispersed in confusion, fear and fright having entirely over-taken them. Thus Medina was safe once more.

Still Medina contained the Jews who were inveterate enemies of the Moslems. They had helped treacherously the enemies outside, and were still persuing the same traitorous course. The Law of Moses was, therefore, applied to them, and nearly four hundred traitors, were put to the sword for high treason against the state.

This punishment is much criticised, and a capital charge laid against the Moslems. Lane poole writes:— "It was a harsh blood

sentence, worthy of the episcopal generals of the army against the Albigenes, or of the deeds of the Augustan age of Puritanism; but it must be remembered that the crime of these men was high treason against the state during a time of siege: and those, who have read how Wellington's march could be traced by the bodies of deserters and pillagers hanging from the trees, need not be surprised at the summary execution of a traitorous clan".

When we take into deep consideration the high treason for which the Jews were punished, applying their own laws, consulting their own books, and tried by their own judges, the punishment was, as the great historian Grote puts it; "a strict application of admitted customs of war in those days." And compare this with the massacres of King David; "the conquered Ammonites he treated with even greater ferocity, tearing and hewing some of them in pieces with harrows, axes, and saws; and roasting others in brick-kilns." So, in this case, no blame of injustice can be attached to the Prophet's name.

The Armistice of Hudaibiyya and thence-after.

Thus, within a period of six years, the Moslems had fought and won many battles and a Moslem State was predominantly established whose capital was Medina, with its Moslem law, religion and morality. Yet the memory of home, sweet home, haunted the minds of the immigrant Moslems. This yearning was quite natural, and after these years of anxiety and distress, they thought of Mecca, their cradle of birth. They also wanted to perform pilgrimage at the House of God. Hence, Muhammad started for the Holy City, with fourteen hundred followers.

But the Quraish, who still desired war, forbade the Moslem pilgrims' entry into Mecca. The Prophet sent messengers to inform them that he was proceeding there with his followers for pilgrimage on a peaceful mission. At length, a ten years' armistice was signed between the parties with the clauses to the effect that the Moslems could perform their pilgrimage a year thence-after, staying not more than

three days at Mecca for the purpose, and that no Moslem resident should be taken back from Mecca to Medina. Besides they were to come unarmed, with their swords sheathed.

This agreement was construed by the enemies as their victory on Islam. They were glad that the Prophet was, after all, humbled. But the Koran says, "I have made thee (the Prophet) victorious."

"To show that you are faithful to your contract, an opportunity has just arrived. This man Abu Fundal, is my own son. He has embraced Islam. I wish to take him back so that I may punish him for his change of faith." So spoke, Suhail, the Quraish delegate, in the very presence of the Prophet, showing his cruel attitude towards his own son who had accepted the new faith. The Prophet only could say to that harassed soul the following words: ".....and Allah shall open a way for thee."

After the armistice, the Quraish continued to persecute the Moslems at Mecca, and according to the agreement even such of

those who sought refuge at Medina, were extradited for further persecution. Aqba, a Moslem refugee from Mecca, had to leave Medina on this account. But he managed to kill the pagan guards, and freed himself to safety. Gradually other Moslems from Mecca joined him, and a regular Moslem colony was established near the village Aais on the coast. These colonists in revenge harassed the Quraish caravans till at last, the Clause, governing the extradition, was by mutual consent revoked. Thus Allah did find a way for the Faithful. Rumi says:—

"Union exists beyond all thought and speech,

Between Great Allah and the soul of each."

The Fall of Khaiber.

The Jews, the other equally bitter enemies of Islam, still continued their inimical attitude in their exiled state amidst the mountain fastnesses of Khaiber. With their money-lending business, they soon revived their influence over the nomad Arabs, and a formidable coalition against the Moslems was the ultimate result.

Somehow, the Quraish did not receive their invitation with their usual zeal to join them in their fight against the Prophet. Thus they were left alone to fight out the issue, yet feeling confident because of their impregnable fortresses. To defend the Moslem State, an army of sixteen hundred marched towards Khaiber. There were a few women also among them to look after the wounded and the sick.

Fort after Fort fell, though the Jews fought with extraordinary courage. Their defence at Qamoos was almost too strong for the Moslems, who though ultimately victorious gained a dear victory with heavy losses. A regular shower of arrows was coming from behind the parapets, stones were hurled, and boiling oil was poured over the devoted heads of the Faithful, who charged repeatedly with renewed fury and zeal the formidable fort, under the command of their ablest general, Ali. Many fell down dead, as there was a grim struggle for two hours with battle axes and swords. At last, the fort was captured and Islam was once more triumphant. The enemies surrendered and the battle was over.

In meeting out punishment to the enemies, the Prophet was extremely merciful. He did not apply the Jewish law which said to strike all the males with sword. He allowed them to have their own religion, and did not burden them with extra taxes. They were even promised protection at the hands of the Moslems.

The Expansion of Islam.

Next came the period of the peaceful penetration of Islam everywhere. There ensued a normal, peaceful state between Mecca and Medina, gradually creating mutual trust and intercourse, so necessary especially for trade purposes. People passed between the cities freely and peacefully.

During this peaceful time, many people worthy of note were won over to Islam. Khalid was one of them, the famous Cavalry Commander of the Quraish, who led a Moslem army to victory against the Greeks. Amr Bin Aas was another man, who conquered the whole of Egypt and brought it under Islamic sway. These conversions during peaceful times throw the lie direct to

the face of those who argue that the expansion of Islam was effected by the sword. The Koran says: "There is no compulsion in religion." (II: 256.) After the fall of Khaiber, the Jews were allowed to follow their own religion.

The various sections of the Moslems, lying scattered hitherto, were brought together in Medina, the seat of the Prophet, an act by which the strength of the Moslems was further consolidated. During this period, many attempts were made on the life of the Prophet, important among them being the case of a Jewish woman who tried to kill him with poisoned food.

During this period, the Prophet sent envoys to the various kings and dignitaries of neighbouring kingdoms, to Heraclius the Emperor of Greece, to the Negus of Abyssinia, to Khusru Purviz the king of Persia, to the ruler of Egypt, and to many Arab Chieftains. It was no wonder that Heraclius received with great pomp and show the Moslem envoy, because he had heard of the Prophet's excellence from such an

avowed enemy of the Prophet as Abu Sufyan. He knew what Islam was doing for Arabia.

That he (the Prophet) belonged to a highly-placed Quraish family, and that he was bold enough to proclaim himself as the Messenger of God, advising all to pray, to be truthful, and to lead a chaste and pure life, were some of the details about the Prophet that the Emperor learnt from Abu Sufyan.

The Emperor readily admitted that Muhammad had all the qualities of a Messenger of God. He said, "If that is so, his domain will stretch far beyond my kingdom. I have known that such a Prophet will rise, but naught did I think of such an advent in Arabia. O! I wish that I could wash his feet if I could only go there!" Lastly the Prophet's letter was read out to the Emperor by the messenger, inviting him to the worship of one God.

Quite a different reception was accorded to the Prophet's messenger who happened to go to the Persian Court. Tear-

ing the letter of invitation to pieces, the proud king angrily roared out thus: "This letter, this mere application of an uncouth Arab, begins not with my name. I am the king of Kings. Who is this Muhammad, of what account is he?" He even went to the extent of ordering the arrest of the Prophet. "Like the shreds of my letter, the kingdom of thy king shall be torn to pieces" was the Prophet's reply to the two soldiers who had come to Medina with orders for his arrest. The prophesy was soon fulfilled, as the king was assassinated by his own son, and the whole kingdom subsequently went to the dust.

The Abyssinian king readily embraced Islam. The Prophet received presents and a courteous reply from Egypt. One of the Arab Chieftains, it may be interesting to note, required a share in the government for embracing Islam.

The ruler of the Province of Busra was a Christian Arab who took the extreme step of having the messenger of the Prophet slain, giving "a reply of war to the peaceful

approach." This was the origin of the battle of Mubah.

It was an undecided battle, and as usual, a small Moslem force armed with unflagging faith in Allah, faced a mighty army. Many Moslems were slain, including Jafar, the uncle of the Prophet. Zaid, the Prophets' slave and adopted son, was at the command of the force, which clearly manifests an important aspect of early Islam, which preached and practised equality. All Moslems are brethren. One has "to lose one's caste" in embracing Islam, as there is no question of race, rank, tradition or colour in Islam. The Prophet's attempts to remove slavery and put in force equality and brotherhood alone exalt him to the highest rank and fame, and perpetuate his name infinitely for his noble services he has rendered to the world at large for all the times to come.

The Moslems Visit Mecca.

The truth of Hudaibiyya shows how the Prophet was extremely anxious to secure peace and avoid war. He had reached the very confines of the holy city and had a

good number of armed followers, to "war in the name of Allah, if such an occasion arose." But he preferred returning to Medina.

The next year he started again for Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. According to the terms of the treaty, the pilgrims stayed in the city for three days, entering it, according to the stipulation, unarmed and leaving it as peacefully as they entered it.

It is needless to say how the Prophet observed the terms of the treaty to the letter during his three day's stay along with his men at Mecca. He could have very well occupied the deserted city, but he was never tempted to do it.

It was really a unique sight in the history of the world, the city of Mecca being for three days vacated by all of its inhabitants, high and low, every house practically deserted for the exiled converts, who after many years banishment from home had come to offer their pilgrimage there.

To make a circuit round the Kaba is a practice that is still carried out by the

pilgrims in accordance with an order from the Prophet, "to run round or to encircle the temple with quick paces,..... showing no fatigue or exhaustion, while repeating the name of Allah".

The pilgrimage being performed, the two thousand pilgrims peacefully left the city. The safe return of the pilgrims was an occasion of great jubilation in Medina, which produced a desirable effect on those who had not till then come within the fold of Islam.

THE CONQUEST OF MECCA.

Physical And Spiritual.

Mecca was ere long destined to come under the complete control of the Prophet. The Arab tribesmen of Khizaah, allied to the Moslems of Medina, were attacked by the people of Banu Bakr, openly supported by the Quraish. Hard pressed, those tribesmen sought refuge in the sanctuary of the Kaaba. But even in this very sanctified area, Noful, the chief of Banu Bakr, carried on his awful massacre.

It was terrible and against the treaty of Hudaibiyya. The Prophet then on behalf of the aggrieved party made three demands, namely, blood-money to be paid for the slain, the Quraish to abandon their alliance with the Banu Bakr, and to declare the treaty null and void, making the acceptance of any one of these demands imperative. The Quraish were inclined to agree to the third condition, but their effort afterwards to open through Abu Sufyan further negotiations was a failure.

Ten thousand Moslem warriors now marched towards Mecca. Many other tribesmen joined them. Abu Sufyan, the arch-enemy of Islam, who had even plotted the assassination of the Prophet, was arrested, but not beheaded, though he richly deserved the capital punishment.

The Prophet had given strict orders against looting and plunder, and with the only exception of a little resistance offered by the cavalry under Khalid, the occupation of Mecca by the Moslems was effected without opposition. "The might of Islam had chilled the courage" of the Quraish.

The whole Mecca now lay at the feet of the Prophet. He could take full revenge on his enemies for all the persecutions he and his followers had suffered at their hands. He could plunder and loot, and he could carry on a massacre by thousands. But what did he do ?

He fought and conquered for the sake of God. He knocked down the idols, saying, "Truth is come, untruth is removed, idolatry is false and perishable." Then all were called to prayer, to bow before one God. He declared a general amnesty to all. None were compelled to accept Islam. Mecca was won and the Moslem's victory completed. The Prophet cleared the sanctuary of its loathsome idols rendering it by all means worthy to be called Allah's house.

Later the Prophet climbed the heights of Safa where a considerably large number of people came to take the oath of fidelity to him and accept his faith. They took the oath saying, "We shall not adore any one but Allah; we shall not commit larceny, adultery, or infanticide, nor utter falsehood, and speak evil of women." Addressing the

people the Prophet said: "O! you men of Quraish, the pride with which you carried yourselves during the period of darkness is gone never to return, for God wills it so. All men are the sons of Adam, and Adam was made of clay.....In the sight of God only those are noble whose actions are pious and free from evil....."

The Battle of Hunain.

Scarcely a month after the battle of Mecca, the Moslems had to fight in self-defence against the tribes of Hawazin and their allies who had posted themselves in the valley of Hunain (between Mecca and Taif) to cut off the Moslems' way to Medina. There were ten thousand Moslem warriors. They fought with unsurpassed courage and boldness such as the world has seldom seen. But they suffered heavy casualties. The enemies' archers did much havoc, and many Moslems died. Yet, though confusion reigned everywhere, the Prophet's inspiration converted the desperate situation into a decided victory. He called out, "I am the Prophet, I am the true Messenger of Allah."

Again the faithful fought, "to kill or be killed," and they won. There were six thousand prisoners, and an abundant booty of sheep, camels, and money fell into their hands, out of which individually each of them got a due share on distribution.

"My own share of the captives including the descendants of Abdul Muttalib, I give you back at once," the merciful Prophet said in response to the Arabs' request for the release of the prisoners of war. Others followed his noble example, and immediately all of the prisoners were let off.

Afterwards a Moslem expedition was sent to Tabuk in Syria against the Roman troops that were to help the Arab chieftains against them. But they never turned up, and after twenty days' waiting, the Moslems returned to Medina. In this expedition, for the lack of proper provisions, many Moslems died on their way to Tabuk.

Atba, the leader of a deputation of the tribesmen of Taif to the Prophet, returned to his people, embracing Islam, and he was

stoned to death. But his martyrdom worked miracle and soon the tribesmen commenced embracing the new faith. The Prophet insisted that they should observe all the principles, practices, and moral codes of Islam. Consequently the numerous stone gods were immediately hurled off from their seats.

Many other Arab clans readily embraced Islam, and the spontaneous conversion of practically the whole of Arabia within a short time is in itself a positive proof to point out that Islam was not spread through the sword. The various wars that the Moslems were forced to fight were entirely of a defensive nature to protect the infant faith from enemies all round. These wars had almost come to a close. A strong Moslem state was established in Medina, and in its wake clans after clans embraced Islam. The new faith aroused a spiritual life throughout. Muir says: "Never since the days, when primitive Christianity startled the world from its sleep and waged a moral conflict with heathenism, had men seen the like arousing of spiritual life, - the like that suffered

sacrifices, and took joyfully the spoiling of goods for conscience's sake."

Shortly afterwards came the first Islamic pilgrimage to be carried on according to the strict principles and rules of Islam. It was laid down that no non-Moslem shall enter the precincts of the Kaaba, and that none shall take rounds of the shrine without a proper dress.

Five hundred Moslems under the leadership of Abu Bakr, with Ali as standard-bearer, took part in this first regulated pilgrimage, at the close of which all the treaties and engagements under-gone before with the heathens were declared null and void.

The Home Life of the Prophet.

The Prophet's private life, his dealings with his friends, relatives, and family, was in perfect accord with his public activity, being the same truthful, merciful, just and loving man.

He had a deep affection for his daughter, Fatimah, and also for his grand-children. He

married Khadija, who was senior to him by fifteen years, and till her death he did not marry another woman. Then he had other marriages. A charge, that he practised polygamy and allowed his followers the same, is levelled against him; but it can easily be explained.

This is a fact that he contracted these marriages due to political circumstances, and with a higher humanitarian consideration in view to save the honour of the women of those followers who laid their lives in sacrifice in the cause of Islam. That the motive of sensuality had nothing to do with these marriages, will be clear enough to any one who studies his private life dispassionately.

This great man whose name was on the tongue of everybody led the simplest life (a sensual man cannot be of this type) with practically no furniture of any kind in his house. His family had a hand to mouth existence, often almost starving, and his wives could not expect even a bit of comfort at the height of his prosperity. Yet all of them had nothing but praises for the Prophet,

and they behaved towards one another with perfect amity and love. This could not but be so, for, the Prophet was the model of a husband and householder, being courteous, kind and just to all of them, often helping them in their household duties. He acted up to the Quran which says ".....then marry such woman as seen good to you, two or three or four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one....."

He voluntarily led a life of poverty and simplicity, and spent, whatever he had, in charity. He gave himself up, body and soul, for humanity.

He spoke slowly and clearly, with firmness and deliberation, without breaking into a laughter, yet wearing always a genial look. His eyes did not *roll* about unnecessarily. Above all he never lost his temper.

His daily routine work was very hard, still he went through the day's work without showing any fatigue. He was a man of indefatigable energy. He held daily his

political and spiritual deliberations, dispensed justice and patched up quarrels; and amidst all these he found time to look after the needs of his family, helping his wives in diverse household works for an hour or two. He slept only for a short time, getting up soon for prayers and day's work.

He was a thoroughly practical man. The Prophet himself said once: "I am a practical man, for I have been sent to show to the people how I live as God wishes them to live". One day an extremely poverty-stricken man sought alms from him. The Prophet asked the poor man if he had anything with him as his own. The man replied "I have only a bowl and a cot, and that is all I possess." These things the Prophet auctioned for him for a small sum, and said to him: "Take half of this money to thy children, and with the other half buy a rope and an axe. Go into the country and gather wood and sell it." He did so and later informed the Prophet of his earnings, who said: "Verily, thou art blessed, for thou hast worked and earned by the sweat of thy brow: for Allah does not love beg-

ging.” It was a thoroughly practical lesson from a thoroughly practical man!

The Prophet had a high sense of duty and justice. Once an aristocratic Arab woman was charged with theft, to whom he said, after passing his judgment on her, that he would punish his own daughter similarly if she were to commit the same crime.

Born an ordinary man and living an ordinary life, Muhammad wrought a miracle in ten years. This shows what a tremendous potentiality lay behind his personality and message, stamped with his practical knowledge of the world, which he obtained through hard, and practical struggle. It is this practicality of his life and experience that made him leave to humanity the following message:—“The servants of the Merciful are they who walk upon the earth gently, they, who speak “Peace” to the ignorant if the latter happen to speak to them, they, who spend the night in worship,..... they, who spend neither profusely nor niggardly....., they, who kill not a soul that God hath forbidden... .., they, who commit not fornication.....,

they, who bear not witness to that which is false, and they, who when pass by vain sport, pass by it unconcernedly.....”

The Last Phase.

The Prophet's life and work were drawing to a close. The Quran said. “When there comes the help of Allah and the victory (of Mecca), and you see men entering the religion of Allah in companies; celebrate the praise of your Lord, and ask His forgiveness. Surely He is oft-returning (to mercy)”. Accordingly, he started for his last pilgrimage to Mecca with more than a hundred thousand pilgrims. He wanted to give his disciples a first-hand knowledge of the various ceremonies and practices connected with the pilgrimage. It was then that he gave his final sermon to the faithful that gathered around him. He said. “All the practices of paganism are now trampled under my feet. The Arab and the non-Arab are equal, Adam was the father of all, who was made of clay. The Moslems are brethren, equal in status, therefore give the same food and dress to your slaves as you yourself use. None shall remember and carry on the blood fends of

yore, all that sum which charged as interest on loans is condemned and unlawful, fear God in your treatment towards women; for the right of women is just as great upon you as your right upon women. I have the Book, the Quran for you; hold fast to it, or you shall go astray; give the due to whom due is to be given in heritage; adultery should be punished by stoning the person; a son who disavows his father is accursed; pay your debts; a loaned article is to be returned; and the guarantor is to be held responsible for what he guarantees." The people promised to bear witness to all that he said, and he concluded. "O! Allah, be a witness to what they have said."

The Prophet said again. "Learn all you require regarding the pilgrimage from me, for this is probably my last pilgrimage. Do not adopt your pre-Islamic habits, and begin to strike at each other's necks after I go; for you will have to face Allah one day who shall require you to answer for your sins. The man who commits a sin alone is responsible for it, not the son for his father, the father for the deeds of his son, nor some other person.

Regarding the Government, let me emphasize that even if blackest of all slaves is your officer or ruler, and he conducts the affairs of the state according to the Book of God, obey him. Five times daily you should pray, keep fast during the month of fasting, and obey the Divine Commandments so that you may be the accepted ones."

The pilgrimage being over, the Prophet returned to Medina. He had begun to feel physical weakness, and the poison in him, which a Jewish woman had given him in food some months before, gave him excruciating pain. Yet with all this he led the faithful in prayers. Gradually serious illness overtook him, and Abu Bakr had to take his place in the mosque. "Hold to the Quran and the teachings of the members of AH-LUL-Bait (my posterity), he said over and over again, "Consider it your way to righteousness, good-will and peace....." That pagans were not to be allowed to live in Arabia, that envoys were to be honoured and respected, and that the graves of the Prophets were not to be worshipped, were his last wishes and advices.

He saw with his own eyes the thorough success of his work. He had faithfully fulfilled the Mission entrusted to him by God. Now he awaited His Call, and the call came. The great spirit had its flight to the "blessed companionship on high." "From Him we came and to Him we return."

The Cardinal Practices of Islam.

Prayer, Charity, Pilgrimage, and Fasting, are the four Cardinal practices of the Moslem religion.

About prayer, the Quran says "Rehearse that which hath been revealed unto thee of the Book, and be constant at prayer; for prayer preserveth from crimes and from that which is blameable; and the remembrance of God is surely a most sacred duty."

It is the five-time prayers a day at the prescribed hour, that makes the individual facing Mecca and directly supplicating to God. Cleanliness is enjoined as preliminary to prayers. The various gesticulations and motions of the body in prayer are significant.

The various gesticulations in Islamic prayers are the most important factors constituting the life and soul of a Moslem's prayer. They are, to begin with, standing erect, next to which is the gradual bending of the body, following which is prostration, the forehead touching the ground, all these actions signifying the supplicant's humble attitude to God.

Charity for the upkeep of the poor is enjoined on all Moslems who can afford it and alms are to be given by every family in behalf of every member at the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. Charity is an important aspect of Islam.

Fasting has its chastening influence, with its underlying principle of self-denial. The Quran gives the following instruction regarding fasting. "O! Ye who have believed, a fast is ordained to you, that ye may practise piety, a fast of a computed number of days. But he among you who is ailing, or is on a journey shall fast on an equal number of other days after his recovery or re-settlement. And they who with all their ability do not fast

shall make atonement by maintaining a poor man. But if ye fast, it will be better for you if ye comprehend. God willeth what is easy for you”.

The purpose of the pilgrimage to Mecca is to do away with all sorts of sectarianism and schismatic tendencies, uniting all Moslems into one common brotherhood, with Mecca as the one religious centre for all. Moreover, in Mecca the early struggle of Islam was finally crowned with victory, which rendered the city holy, and whose sanctity was redoubled later by the Prophet's pilgrimages along with his followers. Hence, nothing is more inspiring to a Moslem, and nothing more holy to him, than a pilgrimage to Mecca, towards which he faces five times a day.

Many caravans even to-day travel towards Mecca from Jeddah. The inspiration is still fresh. And as they march on camel backs, the name of Allah rises up from their parched throats. “I am in Thy presence, O, the Mighty, lead me in Thine own way, O, Allah, as I approach Thy throne.”

Several conditions are laid down for a Moslem pilgrim before he undertakes the journey to the holy place. "He must be a man of ripe judgment and intelligence," undertaking the journey of his own free will. He should possess sufficient money for the purpose, leaving enough for his family expenses during his absence.

The Spirit of Islamic Ideals.

Unity, oneness in everything, is the predominant and underlying spirit in Islam, and is the true source of all its strength and vitality. There is the Unity of One God, the supreme focussing and unifying centre, towards which all the other allied ideas of unity are attracted, such as unity of worship, unity and equality of all, (common brotherhood) and the unifying centre, Mecca, for pilgrimage and for daily worship.

It is the abiding pride and glory of Islam that it knocked down at one blow all old world superstitions, fetish worship and polytheism, enthroning the One God, the only God, instead, attributing the chief qualities of justice and mercy to Him. God became a

living factor in the daily worship of mankind, and it was propounded that nothing stands between man and his Maker. Before the advent of Islam there was some vague conception of a vague Supreme Being, Omnipresent and Omnipotent, existing only in the world of intellectual and metaphysical speculation, and not a living force in the daily life of man.

This grand conception in Islam of the worship of One God which is rational and at the same time highly idealistic, (not dogmatic as is wrongly construed) paved the way for the foundation of the modern science, because it rid man of his superstitious fear about the forces of nature. For example, the Arab and Moorish schools of chemistry laid the foundation for modern Chemistry.

Next comes the Unity of worship, the five-time prayers a day, at the same time, for all the Moslems throughout the world, all facing towards Mecca, and all worshipping the One God, which is very inspiring and universally observed throughout the Moslem world.

Even in the daily worship, Mecca has its place as a unifying factor. And as a place of pilgrimage for the whole Moslem world, it is the greatest source and centre of inspiration, unity, and of brotherhood, where all the faithfull meet.

If in the eyes of the just and merciful God, all are equal, there should be no difference of caste, colour or creed. There is no such difference in Islam. There is no high or low; black, white or brown. All are equal. All are brothers. No other religion like Islam has demonstrated in practical life the brotherhood of man.

Islam is not dogmatic. It is ideal, practical, rational, and modern, ideal in its conception of the One God and in its spirituality, practical in its tenets, and modern and rational in outlook. It is the religion for all and for humanity.

Says Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah: "Unity is, therefore, both the nucleus and the aim of the Islamic faith and polity. A unity which springs from a belief in the oneness of the Creator and which spreads out to and inspires

everything in the human beings. From this every belief in the Islamic faith has its rise and sanction; there is One God, one Prophet, one faith, one law, one status for man-kind. The beautiful and simple perfection of the scheme is the best proof that it emanated from a divine source, and directed by a personality, who has changed human history."

The World's Gratitude to the Prophet.

The world will be ever indebted to the Great Holy Prophet, for, he worked for the sole benefit of humanity, not for a particular people or country, nor for a particular time only. He was a selfless, permanent, deliberate, and conscientious worker for all in his age, and the ages to come thereafter. He identified himself entirely with his work for Humanity.

Eradication of Idolatry.

The Prophet gave a death-blow to idolatry, which infested Arabia and its neighbourhood, and which was once for all freed from its barbarous ungodly atmosphere. The

Prophet established, instead, the worship of the One God, the Only God, for ever, which is the highest good conferred upon mankind by him for all the times to come. This means in its turn the total annihilation of man's superstitions, narrowness and ignorance. Islam created a rational, broad outlook on life. It sowed the seed of modern progress.

Science and Religion Reconciled.

Formerly the Christian world of Europe being superstitious was against the acquisition of knowledge. They considered the study of science, philosophy, and medicine as something against religion. It was the Prophet who pointed out the real scope of knowledge, its limitless power towards progress and added that to study about the wonderful works of God is not irreligious at all. Islamic culture through its universities contributed not a little to the Renaissance in Europe. The world must be indebted for ever to the Prophet for giving such a right, rational, and true lead. In his famous book, **The Making of Humanity**, Robert Briffaults says thus. "It was under the influence of the Arabian and Moorish

revival of culture and not in the fifteenth century, that the real Renaissance took place. Spain, and not Italy, was the cradle of the re-birth of Europe. After steadily sinking lower and lower into barbarism, it had reached the darkest depths of ignorance and degradation when the cities of the saracenic world—Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova, Toledo—were growing centres of civilisation and intellectual activities. **It was there that the new life arose which was to grow into a new phase of human evolution. From the time when the influence of their culture made itself felt, began the stirring of a new life.**

No Disease is Incurable.

At that time when society was considerably backward and ignorant, certain diseases were considered to be incurable. The Prophet is reported to have propounded the medical truth that "for every disease a cure is provided." This utterance from the great Master gave a great impetus to medical research and knowledge, and many cures were discovered for hundreds of the so-called incurable diseases. Superstition is the greatest enemy of progress.

Moral Progress.

“None despair of God’s mercy except those who disbelieve” is what the Quran says. Islam and the Holy Prophet teach that no man is beyond reclamation and redemption, however fallen and degraded he might be. Such a high moral idea lifteth many from the quagmire, instilling new life and hope. And none is beyond the scope and mercy of God who is infinitely merciful and compassionate. The Quran says: “Those who seek to meet US and make sincere efforts for that purpose, will be guided to the paths that lead to a meeting with US.” Such broad, optimistic teaching, is the royal road to moral progress.

Equality and Fraternity.

The Prophet levelled down all invidious distinctions and differences, cutting at the root of the racial and national superiority and vanity. He established the big brotherhood of humanity with equal social rights. Islam has no caste, colour or creed. The Prophet said in his last great speech: “O Ye Arabs, for you there is no superiority over other peoples. You stand

on the same ground with them except if you excel in righteousness and love for God. All distinctions based on the accident of birth are false. Real greatness proceeds from the love of God which means service of mankind and the sacrifice of one's own interest." About the social equality of man-kind, the Quran says:

"O men! verily We have created you of a male and a female, and we have divided you into tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most worthy of honour in the sight of God is the one among you who is most careful of his duty. Verily, Allah is knowing and Cognizant." (12: 49).

Equality in Judicial Matters.

Since all are the same in the eye of law, the Prophet enjoined his followers to deal Justice in an equal and even-handed manner, not to be prejudiced by personal considerations, and not to be carried away by caste, creed, colour, or even sex. Every decision was to be based on the merits and facts of the case.

A Unique Lesson in Equality.

The Prophet is once reported to have said thus: "Help thy brother whether he is the oppressor or the oppressed." His followers were naturally taken aback by such a novel advice. "How to help an oppressor?" The Prophet explained that he meant preventing the oppressor from further oppressions. His sense of equality went to such an extent, that he warned Moslems against giving blind and unqualified support to brother Moslems against non-Moslems, emphasizing the supreme importance of justice and impartiality above all.

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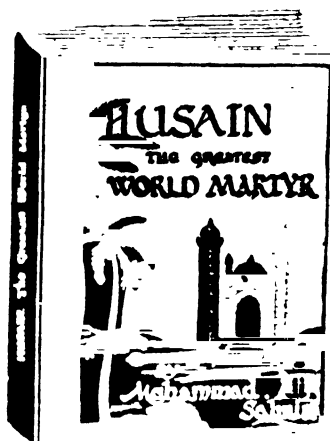
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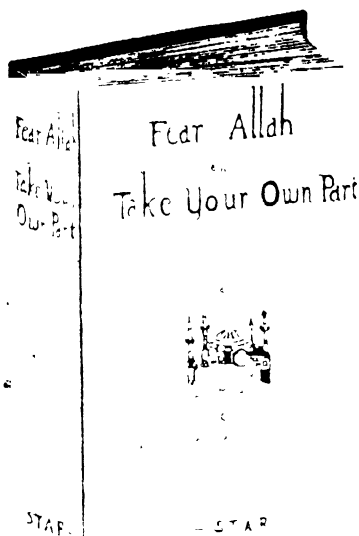
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